

Analysing the use of integrated marketing communication at the View Boutique Hotel in Johannesburg, South Africa

by

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DECLARATION

'I declare that **Analysing the use of integrated marketing communication at the View Boutique Hotel in Johannesburg, South Africa** is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references. I further declare that I submitted the dissertation to originality checking software. I further declare that I have not previously submitted this work, or part thereof, for examination at Unisa for another qualification or at any other higher education institution'.

C.O. MEBUGE
Signature

August, 2018
Date

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to GOD Almighty for keeping HIS promise of always being with me and guiding me through every step. I also dedicate this work to my parents of blessed memory, the late Mr Sunday Samuel Mgbatogu and Mrs Edith Chinelo Mgbatogu. No matter how tall I have grown, I will always look up to you. You left too soon but in the next life, I will come into this world through you.

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List of abbreviations

AAAA	American Association of Advertising Agencies
AMA	American Marketing Association
GNP	Gross National Product
IMC	Integrated Marketing Communication
MC	Marketing Communication
OTAs	Online travel agencies
PR	Public relations
SAT	South African Tourism.
SMEs	Small and Medium Enterprises
StatsSA	Statistics South Africa
TBCSA	Tourism Business Council of South Africa
TBI	Tourism Business Index
UGC	Users Generated Content
UNWTO	United Nations World Tourism Organisation
WOM	Word Of Mouth
WTTC	World Travel and Tourism Council

ABSTRACT

Since the early 2000s, the tourism industry in South Africa has experienced phenomenal change and, concomitantly, the hospitality industry has also seen significant growth. This growth has been driven by factors such as the increased demand for hospitality in both the leisure and the business markets. The hotel industry has immensely been benefited. The Tourism Business Index's report released quarterly by the Tourism Business Council of South Africa, indicating that the revenue received from each available room in the hotel sector increased significantly from 2009. Tourism research has revealed that, globally, the hospitality industry is among the largest employers of labour.

The hospitality industry, especially the hotel sector, works hand in hand with tourism. Tourists traveling to a destination require accommodation which is generally provided by hotels. If the tourist is to have a good experience, it is vital that the tourist organisation and the hotel communicate so as to exchange information. Integrated marketing communication (IMC) has been described as a concept that many organisations adopt in order both to coordinate the operation of the organisation effectively and to increase the bottom line. In IMC, also creates synergy within an organisation and paves the way for consistent messages to be sent out to the organisation's target audience.

The aim of this study was to analyse the use of IMC by the View Boutique Hotel in Johannesburg, South Africa. To analyse the IMC at the hotel, in-depth interviews were conducted with both marketing staff and guests. In the aspect of planned messages, the outcome of the study revealed that the hotel uses marketing communication tools on a limited scale and, that to ensure message consistency the manager handles all external communication activities. However, the study also showed that ensuring message consistency should be the responsibility of everyone employed in the hotel. With regard to the product messages, the study showed that guests were negatively disposed towards the food, beverages, entertainment and recreation offered by the hotel. However, the service messages of the study indicated that the hotel's service quality was good and that the staff were responsive to the needs of the guests. In respect of unplanned messages, the study showed that the hotel was receiving limited

coverage from the media and that word of mouth communication was an effective tool in the hotel's communication toolbox. On the whole, thus, it may be said that the study underscores the centrality of IMC as an instrument for creating and nurturing the relations between the hotel and its guests. It is anticipated that the outcome of this study should provide hotels such as the View Boutique Hotel with guidance in regard to utilising IMC to its full potential to make sure that there is message consistency and also to optimise communication impact.

Keywords: Marketing communication, Integrated marketing communication, boutique hotel, message consistency, guests, relationship marketing, marketing mix, tourism, planned messages, service messages, product messages and unplanned messages

OPSOMMING

Sedert die vroeë 2000's het die toerismebedryf in Suid-Afrika 'n merkwaardige verandering ondergaan, en daarmee saam het die gasvryheidsbedryf aansienlike groei getoon. Hierdie groei is aangevuur deur faktore soos die toenemende vraag na gasvryheid in die ontspannings- en sakemark. Die hotelbedryf het baie hierby gebaat. Volgens die besigheidsindeks vir toerisme wat kwartaalliks deur die Toerismebesigheidsraad van Suid-Afrika vrygestel word, het die inkomste uit elke beskikbare kamer in die hotelbedryf sedert 2009 aansienlik toegeneem. Navorsing oor toerisme het getoon dat die gasvryheidsbedryf wêreldwyd die meeste werk verskaf.

Die gasvryheidsbedryf, en veral die hotelbedryf, gaan hand aan hand met toerisme. Toeriste wat na 'n bestemming reis het akkommodasie nodig wat oor die algemeen deur hotelle gebied word. Om te verseker dat toeriste positiewe belewenisse het, is dit kritiek dat toeriste-organisasies en hotelle kommunikeer om inligting uit te ruil. Geïntegreerde bemarkingskommunikasie word beskryf as 'n konsep wat baie organisasies aanneem om die bedryf van die organisasie effektief te koördineer en die netto wins te verhoog. Geïntegreerde bemarkingskommunikasie skep medewerking in 'n organisasie en baan die weg vir konsekwente boodskappe wat aan die organisasie se teikengehoor uitgedra word.

Die doel van hierdie studie was om die gebruik van geïntegreerde bemarkingskommunikasie by die View Boutique Hotel in Johannesburg, Suid-Afrika, te ondersoek. In die ondersoek van die geïntegreerde bemarkingskommunikasie by die hotel is diepgaande onderhoude met bemarkingspersoneel en gaste gevoer. Ten opsigte van beplande kommunikasie het die studie bevind dat die hotel bemarkingskommunikasie-instrumente op beperkte skaal gebruik, en om te verseker dat die kommunikasie konsekwent is, hanteer die bestuurder alle eksterne kommunikasie-aktiwiteite. Die studie het egter ook getoon dat dit elke werknemer by die hotel se verantwoordelikheid is om konsekwente kommunikasie te verseker. Met verwysing na produkkommunikasie het die studie getoon dat die gaste negatief ingestel was oor die kos, drankies, vermaaklikheid en ontspanning wat by die hotel aangebied is. Die studie het egter bevind dat die diens by die hotel goed was en dat die personeel goed op die gaste se behoeftes gereageer het. Met betrekking tot

onbeplande kommunikasie het die studie getoon dat die hotel beperkte dekking in die media geniet en dat mondelinge kommunikasie 'n doeltreffende instrument in die hotel se arsenaal is. Oor die algemeen kan daar gesê word dat die studie die sentraliteit van geïntegreerde bemarkingskommunikasie onderskryf as instrument vir die skep en uitbou van verhoudings tussen die hotel en sy gaste. Die resultate van hierdie studie behoort aan hotelle soos die View Boutique Hotel riglyne te bied oor hoe geïntegreerde bemarkingskommunikasie ten volle benut kan word om konsekwente kommunikasie te verseker, en om die impak van kommunikasie te optimeer.

Sleutelwoorde: *Bemarkingskommunikasie, geïntegreerde boetiekhotel, gaste, konsekwente bemarkingskommunikasie, kommunikasie, verhoudingsbemarking, bemarkingsmengsel, beplande kommunikasie, dienskommunikasie, produkkommunikasie en onbeplande kommunikasie*

Table of contents

DECLARATION	i
DEDICATION	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iii
List of abbreviations	v
ABSTRACT.....	vi
OPSOMMING	viii
List of figures	xiii
List of tables	xiii
 CHAPTER 1	 1
INTRODUCTION AND PROBLEM STATEMENT	1
1.1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.2 CONTEXT OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM	5
1.3 THE RESEARCH PROBLEM STATEMENT	8
1.3.1 Goal of the study	9
1.3.2 The research objectives.....	9
1.3.3 Profile of the View Boutique Hotel.....	10
1.4 THE MARKETING CONCEPT	11
1.5 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....	12
1.5.1 Definition of relationship marketing	13
1.6 LITERATURE REVIEW	15
1.6.1 Marketing.....	16
1.6.2 Tourism marketing	16
1.6.3 Marketing mix.....	17
1.6.3.1 <i>Product</i>	17
1.6.3.2 <i>Price</i>	18
1.6.3.3 <i>Place</i>	19
1.6.3.4 <i>Promotion</i>	19
1.6.4 Marketing communication (MC).....	20
1.6.5 Integrated marketing communication	21
1.6.6 Integrated marketing communication messages	24
1.5.6.1 <i>Planned messages</i>	25
1.5.6.2 <i>Product messages</i>	25
1.6.6.3 <i>Service messages</i>	26
1.6.6.4 <i>Unplanned messages</i>	26
1.7 THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.....	27
1.8 CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS.....	28
1.8.1 Types of hotels	29
1.8.2 Hotel rating.....	32
1.9 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY	33
1.10 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY	33
1.11 STRUCTURE OF THE DISSERTATION	34
1.12 SUMMARY	35
 CHAPTER TWO	 37
INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATION	37
2.1 INTRODUCTION	37
2.2 DEFINING TOURISM MARKETING.....	38
2.3 MARKETING MIX.....	41
2.3.1 The four Ps of the marketing mix.....	43
2.3.1.1 <i>Place/convenience</i>	44
2.3.1.2 <i>Product/customer value</i>	45

2.3.1.3	<i>Promotion/communication</i>	49
2.3.1.4	<i>Price/cost</i>	50
2.4	INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATION (IMC)	52
2.4.1	Historical evolution of IMC	55
2.4.2	Definitions of IMC	56
2.5	STAGES OF IMC	60
2.6	THE GROWTH OF IMC	64
2.7	THE BENEFITS AND OBJECTIVES OF IMC	66
2.8	THE INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATION MESSAGE TYPOLOGY	67
2.8.1	Planned messages	68
2.8.2	Product messages.....	76
2.8.3	Service messages	78
2.8.4	Unplanned messages.....	81
2.9	DRIVERS OF INTEGRATED COMMUNICATION	83
2.9.1	Ten strategic drivers of integrated communication.....	84
2.9.1.1	<i>Drivers relating to corporate focus</i>	86
2.9.1.2	<i>Drivers relating to corporate processes</i>	87
2.9.1.3	<i>Drivers relating to corporate infrastructure</i>	88
2.10	INTEGRATED PLANNING MODELS	89
2.10.1	A critique of the IMC models	94
2.11	SUMMARY	96
	CHAPTER THREE	98
	RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	98
3.1	INTRODUCTION	98
3.2	RESEARCH DESIGN	98
3.2.1	Exploratory research designs	99
3.2.2	Descriptive research design.....	100
3.3	SELECTED RESEARCH DESIGN AND JUSTIFICATION FOR THE CHOICE	100
3.4	RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	101
3.4.1	Qualitative research	101
3.5	POPULATION	105
3.5.1	Target population	105
3.5.2	Accessible population	106
3.5.3	The unit(s) of analysis.....	106
3.6	SAMPLING	106
3.6.1	Nonprobability sampling	107
3.6.2	Sample size	108
3.7	DATA COLLECTION	109
3.7.1	Interview guide.....	109
3.7.2	Pretesting	111
3.8	DATA ANALYSIS	112
3.9	ISSUES OF RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY	117
3.10	ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS	118
3.10.1	Confidentiality	118
3.10.2	Informed consent.....	119
3.11	SUMMARY	119
	CHAPTER FOUR	121

PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION OF THE RESEARCH RESULTS	121
4.1 INTRODUCTION	121
4.2 DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF PARTICIPANTS	122
4.2.1 Gender	122
4.2.2 Age	123
4.2.3 Educational level	124
4.2.4 Place of origin	124
4.3 THE FOUR TYPES OF MESSAGE	126
4.3.1 Planned messages	126
4.3.2 Product messages.....	134
4.3.3 Service messages	138
4.3.4 Unplanned messages.....	149
4.4 SUMMARY	156
CHAPTER FIVE.....	161
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	161
5.1 INTRODUCTION	161
5.1.1 Conclusions based on the analysis of the empirical study and the four IMC message types	161
5.1.1.1 <i>Conclusions in respect of planned messages</i>	162
5.1.1.2 <i>Conclusions in respect of product messages</i>	163
5.1.1.3 <i>Conclusions in respect of service messages</i>	165
5.1.1.4 <i>Conclusions in respect of unplanned messages</i>	167
5.2 MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY	168
5.2.1 Planned messages	168
5.2.2 Service messages	171
5.2.3 Product messages.....	172
5.2.4 Unplanned message.....	173
5.3 OPPORTUNITIES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH.....	173
5.4 SUMMARY	174
SOURCES CONSULTED	177
List of Annexures	
Appendix A: Letter from my supervisor	195
Appendix B: Letter to the hotel	196
Appendix C: Permission letter from the hotel.....	197
Appendix D: Ethical clearance certificate	198
Appendix E: Informed consent.....	199
Appendix F: Interview guide	200
Appendix G: Interview guide for guests and marketing staff of the hotel	202

List of figures

Figure 2.1: Pyramid of tourists need.....	40
Figure 2.2: The four Ps of the marketing mix.....	44
Figure 2.3: Wider perception.....	46
Figure 2.4: Stages/Levels of IMC.....	61
Figure 2.5: IMC Message typology	68
Figure 2.6: The promotional mix (marketing communication)	70
Figure 2.7: Ten strategic drivers of integrated communication	85
Figure 2.8: An Integrated Marketing Planning Model	90
Figure 2.9: Ehlers' (2002:337) model.....	92
Figure.2.10: Schultz and Schultz's (2003:69) model IMC model	93
Figure 4.1: Gender	122
Figure 4.2: Age	123
Figure 4.3: A chart depicting the location of participants	125

List of tables

Table 1.1: The various principles of the marketing concept.	12
Table 2.1: Marketing mix paradigm shift	43
Table 2.2: Emergence of different definitions of IMC	59
Table 2.3: Profiles of the major media types.....	72
Table 3.1: Research method per research objectives.....	104
Table 4.1: Educational level of participants	124
Table 4.2:Table highlighting the thematic evidence.....	155

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Tourism is one of the most important aspects of most economies with Tourism activities playing a major role in boosting the gross national product (GNP) of most countries. The global economy has experienced a positive turn-around due to the immense contribution from tourism, escalating to 9, 5% of global GDP (US \$7 trillion) and staying ahead of the wider economy . In addition, tourism grows at a faster rate than other important sectors or industries like the business and financial services such, manufacturing and transportation. International growth in tourist arrivals is on the rise as is arrival from various destinations from all over the world. According to the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) Annual Report 2013 to 2014 a 4 to 4, 5% growth was forecast. Approximately, 52 million tourist arrivals were recorded, a total of 1,087 million up from the estimated 1,035 in 2012 (Bakhtishodovich, Khamidov, Mamayunusovich, Ramos-Ramos, Bobirshoyevich, Negmatov & Aminovich 2015: 30-31).

According to Sokhatskaya (2010:117), tourism is recognised as the most stable, fastest growing sector of the economy. Tourism went into XXI century as the most profitable and most dynamic sector in the arena of the international service trade. The above sentence elaborates the steady growth of the sector even in the international service trade. The steady growth of tourism is evidenced in areas such as world gross product, world exports, global investment and job creation. This is similar to the view of Kavoura and Katsoni (2013:114-115) stated that tourism is a fast-evolving economic action which is instrumental in creating employment and ensuring economic growth, sustainability and competitiveness and as such, has consequential social, cultural and environmental implications. Tourism is a part of an international cultural economy that presents places as material nature, produces discursive conceptions and social relations. It has also been referred to as a typical cross-cutting industry in that it covers a variety of economic areas, such as accommodation, gastronomy, transport, and a vast array of cultural and recreational facilities. As expressed by Caves and Gosling (1999:29), in relation to the potential stimulation of the local, global economies and in

the aspect of employment which ultimately is beneficial to a nation. In fact, it has become a catalyst through which income are generated to many developed and developing countries (Golub 2000:3).

Tourism has contributed immensely to the gross domestic product (GDP) of South Africa, R402bn was recorded in 2016 which is (9.3% of GDP) and is expected to increase by 2.5% to R412.2bn (9.4% of GDP) in 2017, and this is according to a report by the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC). Other factors that will accelerate the growth include the wider effects from investment, the supply chain and induced income impacts. Tourism according to the forecast will rise by 4.2% per year to R624.2bn by 2027 - 11.5% of GDP. Travel and tourism has also contributed to employment in the country. It contributed 1.5 million jobs in 2016, this is 9.8% of total employment in South Africa. According to the forecast employment in South Africa will rise to 6.7% in 2017, thereby making it 1.6 million jobs or 10.2% of total employment. Travel and tourism currently support 2.5 million jobs or 13.2% of total employment. "By 2027 international tourist arrivals to South Africa are forecast to total 19 million. This is expected to generate expenditure of R271.3bn for the country. Travel and tourism are expected to attract capital investment of R68.9bn in 2016. This is expected to increase by 0.6% in 2017 and by 4% per year over the next ten years to R102.5bn in 2027" (Smith 2017).

A recent annual report released by South African Tourism (SAT) indicated that, based on thorough, current insights and analytics, South African Tourism is actively earning a reputation for itself both to be a thought leader in the sector and to have a reputable place for itself as a major player in the industry which markets South Africa as one of the top business events and leisure tourism destinations in the world. The aim is also to ensure that new entrants are attracted to the tourism sector by providing support and assistance to small and medium enterprises (SMEs), as this will make the tourism sector more inclusive and attract more travellers to the nation (South African Tourism Annual Report 2016-2017:9-14).

In 2016, over 10 million international tourists arrived in South Africa to tour the country, while about, 11, 7 million locals experienced 24, 3 million trips around the scenic country. Going by the figure, it is evident that the tourism sector has matured to be

one sector that boost of a robust, thriving and lively for the country's economic sectors. In 2017 the UNWTO declared the international Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development. These are instances of sustainable tourism in action, which highlight that tourism may benefit both the planet and the people. In 2016 it was also recorded that globally, tourism reached a total 1, 235 billion tourists, with South Africa obtaining a record of 10 million of the market share, a significant increase of 12, 8% starting from 2015. With this global upward trajectory, the country is positioned as an exemplary nation to expand the importance of tourism, create arena for individual to partake in exhibiting the plethora of cultures, heritage and experiences, and scale its product offerings which the country has to offer (South African Tourism Annual Report 2016/2017:9-14).

The growth in tourism activities is also pivotal in making available basic social amenities such as the building of schools, provision of power supply, security, financial and communication facilities and accessible roads. A survey of this terrain revealed that the presence of the majority of these amenities and facilities is as a result of the direct benefits to the non-indigenous tourists (Amalu, Duluora, Otop, Omeje & Emeana 2017:33). According to UNWTO (2017), with the massive evolution in transportation options, evolving and new emerging markets and improved accessibility, tourism has maintained a position as one of the world's largest and fastest growing sectors which is pivotal in making hundreds of billions of dollars annually through income revenues, investment and infrastructure and employment creation. Tourism has been marked as lucrative and practical in most developing nations, and as instrumental in providing economic development opportunity (Gurtner 2016:12). It is not only the tourism industry that is experiencing this phenomenal change. The growth in the tourism industry is not restricted to this industry but is also noticeable in the hospitality industry, which has been experiencing significant growth since early 2000. This growth has been driven by factors such as leisure and business demands (Kloppers 2005:28).

According to the outcome of a study conducted on tourism, the hospitality industry is instrumental for the creation of employment globally (Amalu & Ajake 2012). Similarly, Ashe (2005) asserts that as the tourism sector continues to expand, it has beneficial implications for the economy of the destination areas. In addition, its significant contribution can be noticed in the achievement of sustainable development in cities,

especially with the fragile ecological environments. The tourism industry consists of a large number of diverse leisure-related activities like sports, holidaying, recreation, sports, travelling and sightseeing. There is also interest in the direction tourism-related activities such as acquisition of jobs in the hotels, enhanced transportation, tour-guiding services, sales of food, drinks, sales of local delicacies, locally made ornaments, handcraft and other local products (Amalu & Ajake 2012).

A recent report released in by South African Tourism (SAT), due to the expansion of the of the potential of tourism in Africa, SAT received R300 million in allocation to further expand its marketing presence in Africa, and also to open four offices in the coming years. Significantly, encouraging results have been seen for SAT's Sho't Left marketing campaign primarily developed for in-country tourists. This was resultant by R100 million in secured ring-fenced investment in 2015/16. The hotel sector has also benefited from this venture. As was revealed in the Tourism Business Index's (TBI) quarterly index, released by the Tourism Business Council of South Africa (TBCSA). There is an indication that revenue has gone up for each available room in the hotel by 7, 9% within the first 10 months of 2014 thereby increasing the revenue obtained. Also, a Statistics South Africa (StatsSA) report indicated that the total income for the South Africa tourist (SAT) accommodation industry, including restaurant and bar sales, had gone up by 7% in 2017. In May 2015, 1,202,795 foreigners visited South Africa. The arrivals consist of 89257 non-visitors and 1,113,538 visitors. The total visitors consisted of 428131 same-day visitors and 685407 visitors that stayed till the next day (Statistics South Africa 2014/15).

The offering of complementary business is a popular characteristic of the tourism industry. Burgess, Parish and Alcock (2011:342) have described tourism as a curious product and of intangible nature therefore making it a peculiar factor for the service sector, including hotels in general. It relies heavily on information that may be accessed at the point of sale and, as such, it cannot be sampled prior to making the decision to swing into the action of purchase. To this end, there is the need for an organisation to structure strategic ideas that will create awareness of its brand and it is at that point that marketing becomes relevant. Looking at the definitions of marketing, it is obvious that marketing is a valuable concept which is indispensable to an organisation, it is not possible to overemphasise the positivity that comes with

marketing as organisations through marketing can create value for their customers and establish sustainable customer relationships (Kotler & Armstrong 2004:29).

There are numerous definitions of marketing, more definitions will be provided as the study progress. The American Marketing Association (AMA) defines marketing as follow “Marketing is the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners and society at large” (AMA:2013). Accordingly, the value of marketing includes putting measures in place to satisfy the needs of the customers, to ensure that organisations have a competitive edge over their competitors, to influence demand and also to influence the buying decisions of the customers (Middleton, Fyell, Morgan & Ronchod 2009:97).

The next section will discuss the context of the research problem.

1.2 CONTEXT OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

With the various communication challenges confronting the hotel industry, there is an urgent need for hotels to disseminate consistent messages to their various target customers using as much channels in order to be able to have a wider reach and create awareness of their products and service offering. At this point, the importance of marketing communications (MC) is evidenced as it is utilised to ensure that, through a well-planned integrated marketing communications (IMC) campaign, hotels are able to have an edge over their competitors from the perspective of the customers. The onus lies on the hotel’s communication team. The team should convey consistent messages on a regular basis to its target audience. This can be accomplished by emphasising the advantages, positive or strong selling points of differentiation, and creating synergy when communicating with the target audience. This will ultimately guarantee the hotel establishes meaningful relationships with its customers and achieves a competitive advantage (Lal, Quelch & Rangan 2005:261).

According to Kim and Oh (2004: 66), an organisation may maintain a competitive edge if it channels its resources to planning strategically internally. When compared with other establishments, hotels operate differently due to the availability of the resources

that is available or to which they can assess. A hotel's competitive advantage depends to a large extent, on how the hotel develops and handles its resources. A hotel could gain a competitive edge in respect of a carefully thought-out reservations system developed particularly for the specific hotel. In keeping with what is obtainable in the current business landscape, it is vital that organisations remain ahead of their competitors by applying strategies of differentiation (Colgate 1998:80).

Branding plays a crucial role in hotels achieving a sustainable, differentiating strategy. A sustainable differentiating strategy calls for the hotel to create and maintain a beneficial emotional relationship with its customers and focus on building lasting relationships with them. Hotels can achieve sustainable relationship by consistently conveying consistent brand messages (Cai & Hobson 2004:206–207). This practice is fast becoming an essentially common place. There is the need for organisations to be active in the marketplace to attract new businesses and tap into existing business. This action will result in marketing becoming an integral aspect of every business. In light of the above discussion, communication challenges that organisations such as hotels face will be delved into as the study progresses.

According to Kurtz and Clow (1998:380–381 & 403) service organisations have strategic plans in place to acquire potential customers and to effectively oversee the business of supplying of the services they offer. Customers do not always purchase or do business with the same organisation and neither do they always remain loyal. In the competitive world of the service industry, in particular hotels, there is a need to constantly seek new ways to stay abreast of the competition (Jenster 2005:163). Services produced by the hotel will always be linked to the hotel and, thus, if the hotel intends to use marketing effectively in the field of hotel services, its focal point should be on the clients. To this end, there is an urgent need to build relationships with both new and prospective customers in order to retain their loyalty.

Researches have been conducted on marketing communication in the hospitality industry. Some of the researches include the perception of social media as a marketing communication tool in star graded accommodation establishments in the Western Cape of South Africa by writers such as (Nieker 2012), Tsaha (2009) conducted an evaluation of the marketing communication methods used by selected

tourism operators with reference to bed and breakfast establishments in Cape Town. Van der Merwe MC Status (2004) investigated the marketing communication methods used by tour operators in Gauteng, while Siedle (1978), conducted a study of the marketing strategies of two random hotels, namely, Lanzerac and Matjiesfontein. This is according to the Nexus database. Previous studies in the field of IMC have focused on the larger categories of hotels, for example, the explanatory study carried out by Petzer, Steyn and Mostert (2008), entitled “Competitive marketing strategies of selected hotels: an exploratory study” and “IMC and Tourism: a case study of Icehotel AB” Conducted by Tornberg (2003). Studies on IMC has been carried out in larger and well-established hotels but not in the View Boutique Hotel, thus, it has not been over researched.

By the time that this study was conducted, only a few studies had been conducted in the field of IMC in boutique hotels with a 5 star rating in Johannesburg, South Africa. No study of this nature has been conducted on the View Boutique hotel, a boutique hotel with a 5-star rating. The researcher saw a gap here and thought that it was worth filling, this motivated the researcher enormously to pursue this study so as to fill the gap. This study analyses the integrated marketing communication used by the View Boutique Hotel to combat communication challenges that the hotel was confronted with. According to Sangaworn and Mujtaba (2015:3), the majority of service industries such as hotels, are confronted with marketing challenges which involve finding methods with which to retain their current customers and upgrade their offering, making it more tangible to potential customers. The next section focuses on the research problem statement and provide a discussion of some of the communication problems confronting the hotel industry particularly the View Boutique hotel.

This section highlighted studies that have been conducted on marketing communication in the hospitality industry. The next section discusses the research problem statement.

1.3 THE RESEARCH PROBLEM STATEMENT

In the light of the communication challenges confronting the hotel sector as a whole and particularly, the View Boutique Hotel, the following problem statement was formulated for the purposes of this study:

“A cross-sectional, qualitative analysis of integrated marketing communication at The View Boutique Hotel”.

Some of the communication challenges that organisations such as hotels face include the use of information communication technology (ICT) to communicate across all facets of the hotel business. According to Almeida, Silva, Mendes and Valle (2012:236), the meaning and use of communication may be applied to any element that can be transmitted to the prospective customer. With communication having the potential to draw customers' attention and trigger the buying decision process, hotels need to substantiate the effectiveness of their marketing communication decisions while aligning their media plans to their communication objectives and justifying expenditures on first-stay booking numbers. In this regard, ICT, which includes utilising the opportunities provided by social media platforms such as Facebook, Google and Twitter, may be used effectively to ensure that things progress as planned. Zivkovic, Njegus, Zlatanovic, Gajic and Brdar (2015:27) were of the view that information and communication may be created for the purpose of gathering and analysing information in order to be able to create new products and service that are in line with meeting and satisfying customer needs. At the View Boutique Hotel, ICT is hardly used to communicate across all facet of the business. Information scarcity prevails there, and the weak online present of the hotel is also an issue. In the competitive world of the hotel industry, it is imperative to be armed with such knowledge to ensure that communication challenges are reduced to a minimum In order to be able to create new products and service that are in line with meeting and satisfying customer needs. In the competitive world of the hotel industry, it is imperative to be armed with such knowledge to ensure that communication challenges are reduced to a minimum.

Marketing is yet another challenge that the hotel industry is confronted with. According to Cooper et al (2008:511) the primary reasons for hotel marketing include the rise in

the number of guests that require lodging accommodation and the incessant rise in the competition offered by the accommodation service providers. In addition, the hotel industry is fast turning into a mature market, with the competition becoming stiffer worldwide and getting customers becoming an issue. At the View Boutique Hotel, marketing activities is out source to a Cape Town based company. The hotel hardly uses the traditional marketing communication mix to create awareness of the hotel.

Accordingly, the study sought to analyse the four IMC messages typology, namely, planned, unplanned, product service and product messages. This section presented the research problem. The following sections focuses on the goal of the study, research objectives and research questions.

1.3.1 Goal of the study

The goal of the study was to analyse the use of integrated marketing communication at the View Boutique Hotel in Johannesburg, South Africa.

1.3.2 The research objectives

Research objectives are not compulsorily positioned in a single category. This means that there can be several objectives in a research, and there are usually various research objectives. This study employed a descriptive objective. Descriptive objectives focus on the characteristics of phenomena, and in some instances, the focus can be on the relationships that between variables. Descriptive objectives may be employed in a quantitative study also in a qualitative study (Du Plooy 2009:52). This study applied a cross-sectional time dimension and, as such, used descriptive objectives.

The objectives of this study included the following:

- to analyse the perceptions of the marketing staff and the guests about the planned messages of the hotel
- to analyse the perceptions of the marketing staff and the guests about the product messages of the hotel

- to analyse the perceptions of the marketing staff and the guests about the service messages of the hotel
- to analyse the perceptions of the marketing staff and guests about the unplanned messages of the hotel.

Having stated the research objectives, the next section presents a profile of the View Boutique Hotel – the hotel under investigation in the study.

1.3.3 Profile of the View Boutique Hotel

This study chose to analyse the use of IMC at the View Boutique Hotel in Johannesburg, South Africa. The View Boutique Hotel is situated in the tranquil area of the historic, leafy suburb of Auckland Park, a Johannesburg suburb. The hotel is housed in an ancient but beautiful mansion and has been termed the most unique boutique hotel in Johannesburg. The mansion was built by Sir Julius Jeppe for his first daughter in the early days of Johannesburg's development. The beautiful mansion has undergone extensive restoration and renovation since 2009 and it now takes its guests back in the day to a golden era of over 100 years ago. Erected on a location that was previously described as remote countryside, "The View" in light of the panoramic vista it provides of the city is aptly named. Its location provides a laid-back oasis amidst the busyness of the city of Johannesburg. A gem to the core, when its dark, the view allows for beautiful, alfresco dining in its restaurant overlooking the millions of sparkling lights reflecting the vibrant life of Africa's industrial and commercial capital (The View Boutique Hotel 2017).

Having accorded a five-star rating, the hotel gives a particularly breath-taking feature – extensive, terraced gardens with soft lights completing its beauty and which, during warm summer nights, play host to many guests. Guests may choose from the various suites available which include the Standard Luxury Suites, Superior Suites or the Honeymoon Suite – all on a bed-and-breakfast basis. There is a unique touch in every suite and has been individually designed, with rich fabrics, magnificent colour palettes and bespoke contemporary pieces of furniture. These are complimented with modern necessities such as large LCD televisions as well as Wi-Fi and cable internet connections to produce luxurious and modern rooms. The space, the deep luxurious

sofas and chairs, the textures, the walls paint and the large windows, all sum up to the touch of lavishness which is deserved from time to time (The View Boutique Hotel 2017). Having provided a brief introduction to the View Boutique Hotel, the next section investigates the marketing concept.

1.4 THE MARKETING CONCEPT

According to Cutlip, Center and Broom (2000:7), “marketing is defined as the management functions that identify human needs and wants, offer products and services to satisfy those demands, and cause transactions that deliver products and services in exchange for something of value to the provider”. This definition of marketing suggests that the marketing activities are strategically coordinated to achieve a desired outcome. The aspect of the definition “identifies human needs and want, offers product and services to satisfy those demands” highlights that marketing involves research as it is only through research that the needs of the clients may be known. The other aspect of the definition explains that marketing is carried out with something being given in return for the services rendered. For example, the organisation offers the client its products and services in return for something of worth. It is anticipated that this something of value will help the organisation to fulfil its bottom line economically and remain in business.

The marketing concept includes the following three core principles, namely, profit orientation, customer orientation and integration of organisational activities. However, it was found that these initial principles were not sufficient to address consumers’ needs in the long term and, hence, the need to include the fourth principle, namely, the societal marketing concepts. Although these principles all have various roles to play, the successful implementation of the concepts depends on certain variable (Angelopulo & Barker 2013:152). The concepts of marketing principles and their explanations are presented in the table below.

Table 1.1: The various principles of the marketing concept.

Marketing concept principle	Explanation
Profit orientation	Maximisation of profitability is the primary objective of any profit-seeking organisation, but this can be achieved only if consumer needs are met.
Customer orientation	All marketing activities of the organisation should take into account consumer needs, demands and preferences.
Integration of organisational activities	All departments in the organisation must work together to realise the marketing objectives. This is best achieved using an IMC approach.
Societal marketing	When marketing policies are set, marketers also need to consider organisational profits, consumer needs and the interests of society.

Source: Angelopulo and Barker (2013:153).

After the discussion on the marketing concept, it was deemed relevant to briefly discuss relationship marketing which was the theoretical framework used for this study.

1.5 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework used for this study was relationship marketing. Relationship marketing was chosen as the theoretical frame work for this study because it was felt it would provide additional perspective to the study and, moreover, it is linked to IMC in that IMC is an instrument for creating and nourishing relations with customers. The most important aspect of marketing for an organisation should be to establish a lasting relationship between the organisation and its customers (Duncan 2002:7). Relationship marketing involves the ability to generate business and acquire

customers and retain the loyalty of the customers to the product and service offering of the organisation. The organisation can achieve this feat by creating methods to ensure that customers are satisfied and, at the same time, remain in business (John & Greyser 2006:732). Now more than ever, advertisers are coming to terms with the fact that, to build brand equity, they must develop interdependent, mutually satisfying relationship with their various clients. To this end, it is important to provide a brief discussion on the origin of relationship marketing, what relationship marketing entails and also provide some definitions of the concept.

1.5.1 Definition of relationship marketing

There are various views on the origins of relationship marketing in the relevant literature. However, scholars in this discipline gave the credit of the origin of the concept to Berry (1983). According to Narteh, Agbemabiese and Braimah (2013:411), Berry (1983) came up with the concept of relationship marketing in the context of services marketing. At the same time, in a bid to give clarity to the concept, Berry (1983) provided a definition of relationship marketing. Berry (1983) defines relationship marketing as the process of “attracting, maintaining, and – in multi-service organisations – enhancing customer relationships”. This definition depicts an appreciation that attracting new customers is perceived as a middle aspect in the marketing processes only and that it does not entail the holistic approach to the concept.

Relationship marketing has been significantly recognised from both the academic and the business perspectives during the last decade. According to Jung, Ineson and Green (2013:294), the relationship marketing concept is not simplistic in that it grew out of a combination of noteworthy theories that made a substantial contribution to the development of its prevailing status. Social exchange theory and social network theory are some of the theories included and there were both derived from sociology and social psychology. These disciplines have contributed extensively to the existing body of knowledge on marketing networks. Previous marketing literature, such as that authored by Heide in 1994 in a bid to clarify some aspects of relationship marketing identified four theoretical approaches to the concept.

The four theoretical approaches include, first, relationship initiation. Relationship initiation evaluates potential exchange in partners' aspects. It deals with such issues as "initial negotiation" about any subsequent relationship, and preliminary adaptation efforts. The second is relationship development which deals with "Joint planning efforts subject to change and modification, evaluation process of relationship for identification of continued mutual obligation of performance and effectiveness Increase of interdependence through enhancement of mutual benefits and attractiveness Value creation through synergistic combination of partners' strengths Minimum commitment of resources". Third is relationship maintenance which entails joint planning efforts subject to change and modification. Here, adjustment is based on mutual agreement, self-control and negotiations. The fourth is relationship termination and is based on open-ended interactions (Batonda & Perry 2003:1460-1464).

In addition, Mattsson (1997) wrote about differentiation between relationship marketing studies and network studies. Ultimately, all the literature points in one direction, the marketing mix theory contributing to the advancement of relationship marketing.

Irrespective of the popularity of the concept of relationship marketing, there is still doubt about its effectiveness. However, this has not deterred its use in the marketplace due to the changes experienced in this arena on a regular basis. The above perspective is in line with that of Arens (2006), who maintains that there is slight deviation between maintaining and terminating a relationship. In that the former is based on maintaining the relationship so long as it ultimately leads to gaining something of value, while the latter may terminate a relationship if it is not working. According to Jung et al (2013:294), there is a general concern among marketers about whether relationship marketing should be embraced in the marketplace holistically. Marketers have noticed the decline in message impact and trustworthiness in organisations. For there to be growth in organisations, there is the need to tap into the concept of relationship marketing which calls for establishing mutual, long-term relationships with customers as this will, ultimately, ensure a successful approach to business. Jung et al (2013:293) opine that this concept of relationship marketing applies notably in-service industries because its characteristics are suited to the adoption of a consumer centric relationship approach to marketing.

Relationship marketing may be applied in the hotel context as the hotel industry may use it to counteract different purchasing attitude that discourage loyalty, such as brand-switching. This attitude is popular among customers because they are spoiled for choice. Relationship marketing may also impact on marketing communication tools such as word of mouth which is also an effective communication method (Jung et al 2013:294). Relationship marketing creates a profitable relationship because customers become more attached to the hotel than may otherwise have been the case and are more accepting of the hotel's services than new customers. The more customers remain loyal to a hotel, the higher the increase in its profitability. Hotels have undoubtedly benefited from using relationship marketing (Sarwari, Minarn & Chowdhury [sa]:68).

This section briefly discussed relationship marketing and presented a definition of the concept. The next section investigates existing literature on IMC in order to obtain a better understanding of the topic under investigation.

1.6 LITERATURE REVIEW

Integrated marketing communication (IMC) is instrumental in relationship building. IMC is perceived as a method through which customer relationships drives brand value. It has also been explained as a cross-functional practise that may be used to foster beneficial relationships with customers and other stakeholders by tactically controlling (planned) or influencing (product, service and unplanned) all the messages disseminated to the group of interest and encouraging a data-driven, purposeful dialogue with them (Rakickaite & Vaitkiene 2013:28–29). According to Kliatchko (2008:141), IMC involves forming a relationship that is workable with an organisation's different stakeholders by using a combination of various marketing communication tools. IMC does not restrict itself exclusively with the combination of the various functional areas of marketing and communication; it also includes the various functional sections that sums up an organisation. The study focused on marketing. Accordingly, it was deemed necessary to briefly explain terms such as marketing, tourism marketing, marketing mix, marketing communication, integrated marketing communication, IMC messages and relationship marketing as this would lend credence to the study. Thus, the next section focuses on marketing.

1.6.1 Marketing

In its contemporary form marketing is an artefact of the twentieth century. Despite both the positivity and criticism it has received, it has, nevertheless, been legitimised by its wide adoption and it is, in fact, strongly rooted in most societies. Marketing is contemporary, it is important. It is national, international and global. It may be applied to vast array of businesses and to a fast escalating global population which, in 2016, stood at 74 billion but is expected to reach 11, 2 billion by 2100 (Kitchen & Sheth 2016:1907). Marketing has become a connection between businesses and organisations of all forms and proportion and customers and consumers. It is a vital force in all markets and nations. The same applies to the majority of businesses in the twentieth and twenty-first century, as businesses change over or move from a production, product and sales orientation towards a marketing and/or societal orientation. Marketing seeks to work in the best interest of the target audience, to accomplish its needs, and to effect changes that are invariably presented in a manner that will benefit the target audience (Kitchen & Sheth 2016:1908). This view is similar to that of Duncan (2002:13) who asserts that the notion of marketing involves attending to the needs and wants of the customers so that the set goals maybe attained. Combining the marketing mix of the organisation comprises of product, price, promotion (marketing communication) and place (distribution). These may also be described as the “four Ps” and the marketing strategy areas.

1.6.2 Tourism marketing

The service sector is instrumental in developing the economy of the world. Tourism, as an aspect of the service sector, has demonstrated positive dynamics for some years now. Tourism has been described as one of the global largest and rapidly growing industries by the UNWTO 2015. Tourism have generated hundreds of billions of dollars yearly through employment, income revenues, investments and infrastructure. Adding achievement such as improved accessibility, enhanced transportation options and innovative emerging markets it has thus, been broadly recognised as a practical and rewarding economic development opportunity, especially in developing nations” (Gurtner 2016:12). Tourism marketing is process through which a tourism organisation originally forestalls consumer needs and then invents ways to see that those need are satisfied those so that sales transactions are

concluded (George 2001:19). In other words, the organisations already have an idea of what the customers would like, and they are willing to provide a turn-key solution to meet such needs so that both parties will be satisfied.

1.6.3 Marketing mix

When an organisation develops a product or service, this product or service must be released into the market so that the public becomes conscious of the new product or service. Releasing such products and services into the market should be strategically done with the sales and marketing managements ensuring that the target audience is reached. To this end, important elements such as product, price, place and promotion are taken into consideration to ensure that the goods to gain market demand (Anusha 2016:1). Marketing mostly begins from the “marketing mix” which includes sponsorship, internet marketing, database marketing, direct marketing, and public relations. Combining all these promotional tools together with the other mechanisms of the marketing mix drives towards the organisation in question to gain an edge over its competitors (Brunello 2013:9). The marketing mix is an important concept in contemporary marketing and is often referred to in common debates on marketing. The marketing mix may be described as comprising the important elements that should be employed in order to market a product efficiently. These important elements are referred to as the 4Ps, namely, product, price, place and promotion (Išoraitė 2016:25). The marketing mix is instrumental in guiding the understanding of the fundamentals which are integral to an excellent marketing campaign (Anusha 2016:1). The 4Ps of the marketing mix are discussed individually.

1.6.3.1 Product

Product is a tangible or intangible item which is developed for the consumer and in exchange for payment. Product may undertake the form of tangible goods, such as books, furniture, and grocery items, or intangible products, such as services rendered. The first “P” of the marketing mix is “product”. It is based exclusively on the needs and wants of the customers and as such assumes a key role to make sure that customers are satisfied. Having the appropriate type of product that is in demand in the market can enhance the organisation’s business. Product goes through stages (known as the product cycle) which helps in the estimation of the product’s life in the market (Anusha

2016:1). The product is the first key of the marketing elements. Kotler and Armstrong (2004:67) point out that the product encompasses what is presented to the market, to get attention, and to be procured for used and be used and can satisfy the wants or needs of the purchaser. The product concept is very extensive and comprises natural products and services, the people that have the experience of using the product, places, property rights, businesses or organisations, information and ideas (Išoraitė 2016:27–28). In organisations such as hotels, the products are fashioned mainly to placate the needs and wants of business and leisure travellers. A hotel room may be viewed as a product which is sold to the customer, this is an aspect of the marketing mix. Hotel rooms may differ in size and/or scheme or in the services they offer and are directed at customers that need a specific type of room (Bowie & Buttle 2004:26–27).

1.6.3.2 Price

Price is one of the fundamental of the marketing mix items and increases the profits and market share of an organisation. However, the price is not the sole central factor in a competitive situation affecting the organisation's sales and profitability indicators directly. Nevertheless, it is also one of the marketing mix elements that can be adjusted to suit the current environmental and economic factors. As such, the price is perceived as the only element of the marketing mix that produces revenue and the one which plays the most vital role customer satisfaction and loyalty factor (Anusha 2016:1).

In relation to price as one of the marketing mix elements noted in the literature there are conceptions and interpretations of its definition. Price has been described as a reasonable valuation of the product that is providing a reasonable price to match a good product. Kotler and Armstrong (2004:27) define price as the monetary value that placed on product or service, or the worth of the exchange to guarantee that customers gets a product or service in return for a stated sum of money. However, the direct cost of the product is the amount of monetary value attached to the product or service which the buyer must pay in order to acquire the product. “The price may also be defined as a financial expression of value for the consumer agrees to pay”. The price is the money that consumer must pay, it involves exchanges, so the price of the product hinge on the diverse elements of change (Išoraitė 2016:30). Price in the hotel context is referred to as rate. Hotel price/rate may be said to be the way accommodation operators gain

competitive advantages with these rates usually being attuned based on the location, facilities and services (Law & Ng 2011:25).

1.6.3.3 Place

Place is a very essential element of marketing. The place is referred to as the channel of distribution and is described as the ways through which products or services gets to the customers and the intended location. Place assist customers and users to locate and buy the products from manufacturers or providers when they have need of them. This element of the marketing mix includes making choices and taking actions on how to convey the goods from the producer to the consumer. Accordingly, distributing the products becomes an operational multifaceted system, where the manufactures, intermediaries, independents trade and the interest of consumers are compatible with each other in a predetermined context (Išoraitė 2016:32). Marketing entails putting the right product at the right price. In other words, the distribution of the product must ensure that the product is at a place where it may be sold to the customer. Thus, place is a location which is chosen based on the customers' needs. In other words, place is where the demand of the product is high and, thus, ultimately, it helps the organisation to increase its bottom line (Anusha 2016:1). In the hotel context, needs varies from one individual to another as do their specifications for the type of rooms they require. In the hospitality industry the place where the business activity is conducted is crucial to success. A hotel's location is important for its guests with guests usually making a careful selection as to which hotel they choose (Bowie & Buttle 2004:26-27)

1.6.3.4 Promotion

Promotion is the fourth P in the marketing mix. Promotion create awareness of the product on the part of the public through various sources including radio commercials, print media, internet advertisement, television advertisements, social media, marketing and email. Promotion includes numerous methods through which marketing agencies publicise important information about the product to consumers, creating a differentiation strategy for a particular product or service. With the varying marketing strategy, the marketing mix has changed with three more P's being included, namely, people, physical evidence and process (Anusha 2016:1). The promotion in the

marketing mix is an instrument that helps circulate information, encourages the action of acquisition and affects the purchase decision process.

Sponsorship is an essential facet of the promotional tool and it encompasses coupons, rebates, awards, contests, discounts and promotions, samples, refunds, bonuses, and product demonstrations. All these are designed to persuade consumers to buy. Furthermore, sponsorship makes the target audience members aware of the benefits they stand to gain if they use the product or service in question and the advantages of such a product or service. In other words, the consumer is convinced that he/she must buy the product or service. However, in order to comprehend what promotion entails is, it is compulsory to contemplate the multifaceted elements mentioned in the literature, for example, advertising, sales promotion, personal selling, public relations and direct marketing. (Išoraitė 2016:33). Promotion is usually carried out by the marketing and sales section, it comprises of all the marketing tools which an organisation has at its disposal to interact with its customers. A hotel may make use of various websites to advertise its products and services and also use brand identification to its benefit (Bowie & Buttle 2004:28). Brands help consumers to categorise what the product or the organisation is about and, thus, in the hotel context, it assists the hotel in planning its marketing strategy (Bowie & Buttle 2004:208).

1.6.4 Marketing communication (MC)

According to Brunello (2013:9), marketing communication (MC) is a concept that was first noticed towards the last decades of the twentieth century. It emanates from the remarkable development in marketing during that period. Various specialists in the discipline have different opinion on the concept content. A discussion on a consensus on the role and importance of marketing communications may arise. In the contemporary economy characterised by high evolution and stiff competition, organisations have to devise means to communicate with their clients and do everything likely to sway the customers about of their products' superiority and the benefits associated with using their products or services. Organisations employ various methods of marketing communication to be able to meet financial and/or non-profit targets.

Govoni (2014:123) maintains that marketing communication is a process whereby an organisation composes some elements, activities, and patterns elements and that can be used to coax the target market to undertake an explicit action, for example, procuring a product, using a service, or embracing an idea of the organisation. Each purpose of marketing communication has its unique sides and organisations are progressively inventing other operative techniques of exploiting these functions (Duncan 2002:16). In addition, issues such as promotional decisions must be made about publicity, public relations, interactive marketing, advertising, direct marketing, sales promotion, and personal selling (Belch & Belch 2001:39).

The point of any marketing communication process includes creating brand awareness, educating the market, delivering information, and advancing a progressive image of the product brand (Brunello 2013:10). In the current environment, marketers are encouraged to adopt the use of a number or a combination of various communication tools to get to their target audiences. Effective marketing communication necessitates the use of numerous mechanisms of marketing communication through which a specific message is conveyed to the targeted audiences. A requirement for effective marketing communications is the consistency of the messages disseminated via various outlets of communication. It is not possible to overemphasise the importance of integration in that the communication of messages and combining all marketing communications will allow for the greatest possible synergy effects (Zarvernik & Jerman 2011:51).

1.6.5 Integrated marketing communication

Proponents of integrated marketing communication (IMC), such as Burnett and Moriarty 1998 have described integrated marketing communication as among the most important communication trends of today. Furthermore, IMC is pivotal in sustainable competitive advantage in the realm of marketing. In addition, other proponents of IMC, such as Schultz, Kim and Kang in 2014 purport that IMC has much potential in terms of being both a concept and a discipline and explain that irrespective of its development and practice reaching back two decades, it has had a significant impact on the diverse areas of marketing and marketing communications. IMC has been defined by academics such as Kliatchko in 2008, as a philosophy. Gould (2004)

and Smith (2012) hold similar views. The expansion of the concept of IMC is continuing even now. Duncan and Mulhern in 2004 and, extended to “corporate”. Einwiller and Boenigk (2012) added “organisational”. This supports the claim that, as yet, there has been no definite definition of IMC proposed. Nevertheless, IMC is perceived by the majority of scholars as something that is old, but which has a new name (Múnoz-Leiva, Lucia Porcu & Barrio-Garc 2015:678).

It is important what people understand by integrated communications. The American Association of Advertising Agencies defines IMC as “a concept that identifies the added value of all-inclusive plan that appraises the strategic roles of a variety of communication disciplines, and combines these disciplines to provide clarity, consistency and maximum communication impact”. According to Jones and Schee (2008) IMC combines general advertising, sales promotion, public relations, and direct marketing. Ultimately, the role of the IMC is to send a message that is consistent to customers with IMC approaches enhancing the use of promotional resource to build long term, sustainable consumer relationships within organisations. IMC has numerous advantages in that it represents a combination of all the marketing tools, approaches and resources within an organisation and, thus, it maximises the impact in the consumer’s mind, ending in maximum profit at minimum cost. In addition, IMC also uses outside-in thinking and is a data-driven method that emphasises on finding consumer insights and coming up with a strategy with the right (online and offline combination) outlets to build a robust brand-consumer relationship than may otherwise have been the case (Brunello 2013:9–10).

Other definitions on the concept of integrated marketing communications include that of Schultz (1993) who defined it as the process through which different methods convincing communication programmes are developed and effect with customers and prospects over time. Nowak and Phelps (1994) provided a definition that focused on the notion of one-voice marketing communications. It may, thus, be said that the concept of IMC includes the significant of brand value strategic business process, the relationship between stakeholders, content, channel, measurability and results. The IMC also create a synergy by using numerous promotional tools such as advertising, personal selling, publicity and direct marketing as well as multiple media environments

such as television, radio, print media and the internet (Kim, Kim & Marshall 2016:1404).

The emergence of the concept of IMC has influenced the ways of thinking and acting on the part of organisations, authorities, state-owned enterprises and political parties as they come to realise that competition is inherent in an open economy. Marketing organisations are increasingly putting together their messages, processes, and communications to fall in the realm of formal organisational boundaries. Two decades ago, when academics and professionals were discussing the theory and practice of business communication, the notion of integration was considered to be an unrealistic approach to achieving a competitive strategic place, by an organisation. The early 1980s witnessed some early attempts that attracted academic interest and articles in the academic literature and, by the early 1990s, IMC had become an important topic in the field of marketing. The basic concept of integrated marketing communication is rooted in the synergy of various marketing communication instruments which are reciprocally buttressing and complementary. The effect of these instruments being used in an integrated way is considerably greater as compared to the effect if these instruments are used individually. In addition, the former also results in a lower cost of communication as compared to the cost of the latter (Zavernik & Jerman 2011:353)

Years back, large portions of marketing budgets were allocated to advertising. However, at the time of the study, marketing budgets are allocated to various marketing communication events such as trade promotions, consumer promotions, branding, PR and advertising. This provides clear evidence of the recognition of IMC as an important instrument for effective marketing (Kerr & Drennan 2010:9). This was also a finding of the survey conducted by Duncan and Everett in 1993 on US communication and marketing executives. The value of IMC was acknowledged by the clients who participated in the survey, who mentioned the effective use of media and the ability to attain a competitive edge as the core motives for the execution of IMC. Clients' perceptions of the role of advertising agencies were also examined. It was found that 57% were of the opinion that advertising agencies should share the responsibility for IMC, with half of those hired already managing more than one marketing communication function.

The dominant precept of the IMC tactic, which distinguishes it from the ordinary view, provides the various medium rises the input of the other media (Naik & Raman 2003:385). IMC is defined as a cross functional method that can generate and nourish profitable and relationships with customers and other stakeholders by strategically monitoring or prompting all messages sent to this clusters and inspiring data driven purposeful dialogue (Duncan 2002: 87). The above statement advocated that an organisation should monitor or control (planned) and influence (unplanned, product, service) messages to establish and sustain stakeholder relationships. Accordingly, this definition has been adopted for the purpose of this study.

According to Holm (2006:24) various authorities in the field of IMC recommended what is now known as the four stages of IMC. It starts with a tactical coordination of the promotional elements. This explains more the scope of marketing communication and how information technology to financial and strategic integration can be applied in this context. It was revealed that the mainstream business was still using the traditional tools of marketing communication only, granting, others were accepting the new technologies. The impact of new technology on marketing was seen in a research carried out by Porter in 2001. The findings of the survey revealed that with the use of new technology, variances among competitors were reduced, competition relied on price and geographic markets widened, with a concomitant rise in the number of competitors. IMC is visibly beneficial to organisations in that it advances the working relations between the stakeholders both internally and externally as well as with the customers. It is not possible to overstate the credibility it gives to a brand. In addition, it also helps in relation to measuring of reaction and in issue that concern communication programmes (Angelopulo & Barker 2013:189). The sections above provided a brief description of the literature review which is the focus of the next chapter. The next section examines the IMC messages.

1.6.6 Integrated marketing communication messages

In line with Duncan and Moriety 1998 definition, IMC involves controlling (planned) or influencing (product, service and unplanned) messages to and from stakeholders. According to Brunello (2013:9–10), organisations cannot be viewed as authentic players if there is either a lack of or no consistency between messages, words,

behaviours, procedures and deeds. The four IMC messages include planned messages, product messages, service messages and unplanned messages.

1.6.6.1 *Planned messages*

Planned messages may be described as messages that are passed through a deliberate marketing communication strategy. Duncan and Moriarty (1997:78) clarify that planned messages are employed to notify and convince customers to purchase an organisation's product offering. In the hotel context, planned messages can take the form using advertising or other marketing mix instruments such as pamphlets to advertise the product and service offering of the hotel. Nevertheless, in view of the fact that planned messages originate from within the organisation, they are perceived as not being credible. Thus, planned messages are messages that come from within an organisation to its audience using a particular medium to sway the audience to act positively towards the organisation. These messages are usually sent out by means of advertisements, sales promotions and various communication tools and may be coordinated by the organisation (Grönroos 2007:305). Planned messages consist of the traditional elements of the marketing communication mix, such as advertising, sales promotion, personal selling, public relations, and sponsorships (Duncan and Moriarty 1997:78). These initiatives harness the sharing and promotion activities between buyers and sellers with the aim of building sustainable customer relationship management (Brunello 2013:10).

1.6.6.2 *Product messages*

Product messages refer to those messages that come from attributes of a product such as the price, authenticity, durability, medium of distribution, physical shape, features, performance and conformance quality, reliability, reparability and style Kotler & Keller (2009:363). Thus, product messages refer to messages from the product, price, or distribution elements. According to Arens (2006:246), this type of message communicates primarily the details of the product through the use of colour, type fonts, layout, imagery and design. In the hotel context a product message would emanate from the hotel and may refer to facilities that are present in the hotel. In as much as product messages cannot be controlled, a hotel should devise proactive means to direct these product messages by meeting visitors' expectations and adapting its

product offering to accommodate the varied and ever-changing needs of its visitors. Although product messages cannot be totally controlled, a hotel may tilt this type of messages in its favour by strategically meeting guests' needs and changing its products and services offerings to meet the needs of its guests.

1.6.6.3 Service messages

Service messages result from contact with the employees of the organisation in question, for example staff members. This type of message is persuasive in nature and is deemed personal and very strong. Service messages emanate from the experience of dealing with the organisation and its employees, agents and products and include the behaviour of staff members of the organisation and the services provided and whether the system and technology that are used are in tune with the organisation's objectives and send out appropriate message about the organisation Duncan and Moriarty (1997:84). A service message from a hotel may, for example, become apparent in a flawless reservations system developed for the hotel (Petzer et al 2008:4). In organisation such as hotels, service messages may be effectively carried using internal marketing. Internal marketing refers to a premeditated effort that utilises a marketing-like approach to motivate, inform, coordinate and educate and internal customers which, in this case, refer to the employees of the hotel (Turkoz & Akyol 2008:150). These messages may be directed towards creating satisfaction for the external customers or guests and, ultimately, enhance business performance. It is imperative that every member of the organisation is aware of and acknowledges the relationship between what they do and the impact of their behaviour on the customer. To this end, employees must be viewed as customers and be treated as internal customers as investing in efficient employees in an organisation such a hotel is tantamount to investing in product quality (Turkoz & Akyol 2008:150).

1.6.6.4 Unplanned messages

Unplanned messages are messages that is conveyed to the target audience using informal mediums such as research outcomes, news stories, rumours, grapevine, gossip and word of mouth. It is almost impossible for the organisation to control these messages (Angelopulo & Barker 2013:45). In the hotel context, word of mouth as a source of unplanned messages can do the hotel business a lot of good, in that satisfied

customers of the hotel will pass positive words about their experience or stay in the hotel to friends and relatives. At the View Boutique Hotel, word of mouth has also helped boost the business of the hotel. Social media can also be used to pass unplanned messages about the hotel as well.

According to Abubakar and Mavondo (2014:838), word of mouth is usually perceived as a face-to-face spoken communication. Spoken communication such as “phone conversations, text messages sent via short message service (SMS), and web dialogue, such as online profile pages, blog posts, instant messages, and e-mails are now included in the definition of word of mouth”. Word of mouth is used mostly commonly to describe positive information dissemination rather than negative information. Word of mouth is regarded as a credible source of information, in that it provides “recommendations about a service provider, passing along positive comments about particular service aspects, and encouraging friends and family to purchase from a particular provider”. Word of mouth is especially important for the service industry since most of its offerings are mainly intangible and experience or credence based (Abubakar & Mavondo 2014:838).

Planned, unplanned messages, service messages and product messages are all significant as they deliver all the communication messages that both the consumers and stakeholder receive (Burnette & Moriarty 1998:8).

After the discussion on the literature review, the next section focuses on the research methodology used in the study.

1.7 THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This section addresses the elements of research methodology, including data collection, the research approach used, and the data analysis conducted. This study used qualitative research methods. The format of the study was cross-sectional with in-depth interviews and observation being used. Secondary information was sourced from marketing text books, marketing journals and the internet. The target population

for the study included guests of the View Boutique Hotel. The researcher's personal contacts included the manager and some of the front office staff of the hotel.

Primary information was collected by conducting in-depth interviews using the interview guide that had been developed for the study. This procedure entailed conducting face-to-face interviews with the participants at the hotel's premises. The selected sample size for the study was a total of thirty participants, 3 of which were marketing staff members of the hotel and 27 guests of the hotel. This method was selected because it was deemed to be both convenient and cost effective. The interview conversations were recorded. Face-to-face interviews were conducted as this enabled the researcher both to have a close encounter with the participants and to be able to observe them personally in terms of their body language, attitudes, facial expressions and behavioural patterns. A definite advantage of qualitative research is the depth of exploration it allows as well as the richly descriptive data it yields (Wagner, Kawulich & Garner 2012:126). The participants' responses were recorded, and field notes made for the purposes of transcription.

1.8 CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS

Tourists travelling to another destination often engage the use of different services including air travel, car hire services, accommodation and tours (Burgess, Parish & Alcock 2011:343). Thus, in this context the issue of accommodation becomes relevant (Dikeni 2001:519). Of the several sorts of lodging available to tourists in a country other than their own, tourists prefer mostly to stay in hotels. The type of services that the hotel industry produces differs from the common concept of marketing. The services are both tangible and intangible while the quality of service depends on the producer. Hotels, for example, differ in style and size. Such dynamics play a significant role in the income made from the business. Some hotels are big and may have as many as 800 bedrooms as, well as other facilities such as swimming pools, a spa, a gym and internet for the guests.

There are also medium sized hotels with fewer rooms with or without the facilities mentioned above. Hotels comes in variety of styles such as the full-service type and medium sized business class hotels. Finally, there are the small country inns

(McManus 2000:131). Especially in view of the fact that retaining customers is one of the challenges facing the hotel industry, hotels that have the capability to attract, satisfy and, thus, retain customers are more likely to survive and remain relevant in the industry as compared to their counterparts which are not able to attract, satisfy and retain customers. Successful customer retention paves the way for the hotel to build relationships with its customers (Hoffman, Kelley & Chung 2003:334). Travellers and tourists all over the world engage the use and services of hotel for various reasons to suit their purpose. Just as individuals are different, so are their needs, specifications and expectations. There are various types of hotel available around the world. They may be rated according to variables such as the size of the hotel, facilities, price/rates of the rooms, period of stay of guests, physical location of the hotel, operation and ownership. Some of the various types of hotel available are discussed below.

1.8.1 Types of hotels

Commercial hotels

As the name implies commercial hotels are found mainly in the central business district or city centre where guests or tourists may easily locate them. This type of hotel makes provision for parking facilities and may also provide convenient business centred facilities. Irrespective of the location of the hotel, it provides services to all kind of guests (Kumar & Narayan 2008:24–26.).

Transit hotels

Transit hotel are located close to airports and motorways. As the name implies, this type of hotel usually attracts the patronage of guests who are in transit and who need to spend a few hours or a few days at a particular place. Transit hotels are known for their design and comfortable settings (Kumar & Narayan 2008:24–26).

Residential hotels

Residential hotels are apartment styled houses and are typically located in big cities. These hotels mainly render services to guests that stay for a longer period of time than transit hotels, but they will also accommodate guests who stay for a short period.

Residential hotels usually provide guests with facilities such as kitchens in case they need to make their own food (Raju 2009:75).

Heritage hotels

This type of hotel may be located on the ancient properties of the rich and famous and even royalty. The property is then renovated although much of its originality is usually preserved to ensure the historical ambience. Because these hotels often awaken curiosity, this type of hotel attracts guests and tourists alike. Heritage hotels are, however, are not found everywhere (Raju 2009:75).

Resort hotels

Resort hotels are situated close to natural sites such as waterfalls, mountains, seas, greenery, lakes, seas and forests. Resorts hotels are intended to give their guests with the opportunity to be close to nature. Modern-day facilities may also be found in a resort hotel, for example swimming pools, golf courses, internet or Wi-Fi connection, skiing, and certain recreational activities. This type of hotels is mostly affordable for middle class wealthy people. Their operation is usually seasonal. However, in common with most hotels, the operations have changed to accommodate more people from various walks of life while operating hours have also been adjusted to suit more people than was previously the case (Raju 2009:75).

Boutique hotel

It would seem that there is no common or agreed upon definition of what a boutique hotel is. However, boutique hotels do tend to share some common features. They are characterised by their intimate atmosphere and stylish design décor with personalise themes. This genre of hotels distinguishes itself from the larger chain hotels by offering personalised attention and styled, themed accommodations. Boutique hotel offer their guests outstanding and personalised service and are usually situated in exclusive urban locations (What is a boutique hotel? 2015). A boutique hotel is generally not a big hotel, it approximately has 10 to 100 rooms. Since the 1980s this type of hotel made its appearance in popular cities such as London, New York, Paris, and San Francisco. The term boutiques hotel was originated by Steve Rubell in 1984 when he compared the Morgans Hotel, the first hotel he owned with Ian Schrager to a boutique. Some of the characteristics of a boutique hotel include its small size of between 10 and 100 rooms, individuality, upscale design, attention to detail, location in trendy, urban areas such as upmarket, residential neighbourhoods, culture of maintaining its

original identity, personalised services, and a mostly affluent clientele. This section contained a brief description of the types of hotels. The next section discusses hotel ratings, thus providing an indication of the direction in which this study is headed.

1.8.2 Hotel rating

The star rating system used in hotels is found throughout the world. According to Brody (2009:71), the users of hotels want to obtain information about hotels in relation to their star rating irrespective of the fact that the criteria for the star rating of hotels differ country to country. One of the reasons why star rating is essential is that it enables customers to make informed decision before purchasing a hotel's product and service offering. In addition, on a management level, the hotel benefits from the rating as it harnesses the quality of the product being offered to the guests.

Each star rating has its own unique characteristics. One-star hotels are usually owner managed and are generally situated near public routes. There are rarely any restaurants in these hotels, but guests may locate restaurants within walking distance of the hotel. The two-star hotel constitutes part of a hotel chain that offers consistent quality and limited amenities. Two-star hotels have small to medium sized rooms which are furnished with telephones and televisions and, perhaps, reading material. Some two-star hotels also have an in-house restaurant. Three-star hotels are usually situated close to a major expressway and business area with shopping centres, banks and hospitals. Their products and service offering include spacious and well decorated rooms, beautiful lounges and attractive dining settings. Three-star hotels also have restaurants that offer breakfast, lunch and dinner. In addition, they offer spas, gym facilities, swimming pools and valet services. The four-star hotels are usually large with high end services. They are generally located close to other hotels with similar ratings.

Four-star hotels are usually close to basis amenities such as hospitals, shopping malls, clubs and places of interest. The rooms are up to standard and there are good restaurants, well stocked bars, spa and gym facilities, internet access, valet parking, and concierge and room services. Finally, five-star hotel customers are exposed to the most luxurious product and service offering the hotel can provide to its guests.

Everything, including the rooms, the decor, internet access, restaurants, gym, spa, and recreational facilities are of the highest standard. There are also various in-house restaurants with high end menus (Enlightenme 2014:66). Until recently the five-star rating was the highest in the hotel ratings system. However, in recent years, a six-star hotel was established the United Arab Emirates. The aim of the brief discussion above on hotel ratings up to five-star ratings was to prepare the reader for the type of hotel that was used in this study. The next section discusses the significance of the study.

1.9 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

It is hoped that, regarding the practical significance of the study, it will empower hotels, such as the View Boutique Hotel, as to the way in which to use IMC to create and foster positive relations with their guests. In addition, the study will fill a research gap on IMC within the hotel sector. It may, therefore, be said that the study should make a meaningful contribution to the academic discourse on the use of IMC within the hotel context.

1.10 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The target population for the study was limited to the Guests and staff of the View Boutique Hotel, which may not represent the entire population of boutique hotels in Johannesburg, South Africa as other towns were not included in the study. This may have caused a bias which made it difficult to generalise the study findings or to make inferences regarding the total population of boutique hotels in South Africa. In addition, the findings may not be applicable to consumers in other places within South Africa. The sampling methods used also introduced further bias because only the manager, the marketing staff and guests of the hotel in the population identified were available to participate. Convenient sampling also excludes qualifying candidates suitable who are not in the right place to be selected or who are late in responding. This may result in some groups being overrepresented in the sample. The sample itself may, therefore, not accurately represent the targeted population. However, this bias was mitigated by the choice of the three target sampling populations. Accordingly, it may be said that the study design was justified despite the technical shortcomings and the fact that study also focused on the IMC message typology only. However, it was impossible to generalise the findings of the study to the entire population. The

disadvantages of qualitative method include the fact that it does not holistically represent the population that is of interest to the researcher. In addition, because smaller samples were used due to a shortage of interviewers, it was not possible to generalise the study outcomes.

The study focused on analysing the integrated marketing communications at the View Boutique Hotel in Johannesburg, South Africa. The study was limited to the management and clients of the boutique hotel. As mentioned in the discussion on the sampling techniques used, the majority of the hotel's clients are based in Johannesburg as is the marketing manager. Again, because most boutique hotels have fewer staff members as compared to the larger or regular hotels, the researcher decided that the appropriate sample size would be 30 guests of the hotel. In addition, at least three members of the marketing staff, including the marketing manager of the hotel, also participated in the interview process. The study was conducted in 2017 over a period of less than one year. The study under investigation was carefully chosen to provide credence to the subject matter under study. In respect of the interviews conducted, an interview guide was used with the willing participants in a natural setting, in this case, the hotel premises.

1.11 STRUCTURE OF THE DISSERTATION

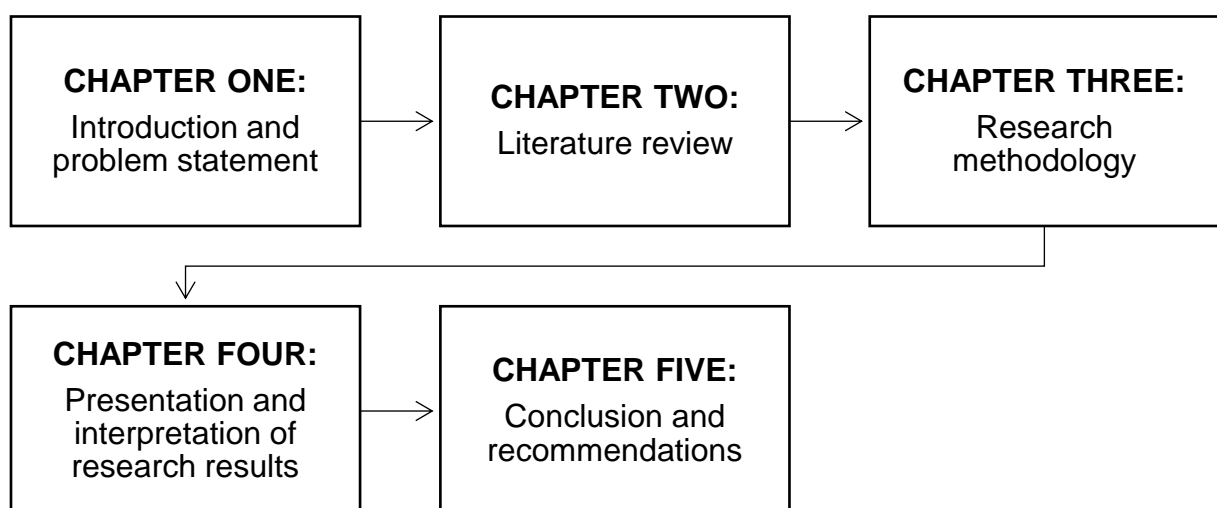


Figure 1.1 Structure of the dissertation

Source: Researcher's compilation

Chapter one provides the background and introduction to the study as well as a discussion of the research problem as well as the goals and objectives of the study. In addition, it also contains a discussion on tourism marketing, hotel marketing and the theoretical framework which underpinned the study, namely, relationship marketing.

In chapter two, the researcher analyses IMC by means of a literature review. Various definitions of IMC from different scholars and different times are provided. The chapter also discusses the evolution of IMC, stages of IMC and various models of IMC that were deemed to be relevant to the topic under study.

Chapter three focuses on the research methodology utilised for the purpose of the study. As such, it touched on aspects of various research designs and the research process while the goals and objectives of the study were restated. The chapter also discussed data collection instruments, sampling method pretesting, issues of reliability and validity, ethical consideration and informed consent.

Chapter four addresses the data analysis and interpretations of the findings. The data that had been collected was analysed and interpreted using thematic content analysis.

Chapter five contains the conclusions of the study and offers recommendation for future research.

1.12 SUMMARY

This chapter discussed integrated marketing communication, the message typology, the tourism sector and the hotel industry. The chapter also explained relationship marketing and provided a structure for the study. The research problem was defined, and the research objectives explained. It was hoped that, overall, the chapter provided an insight into tourism, marketing, the hotel marketing concept, relationship marketing as well as the different types of hotels and hotel ratings. In particular, the chapter provided a discussion on a boutique hotel. The chapter further delved into important areas such as marketing, marketing communication and tourism marketing in general as well as in the hotel context. The chapter highlighted that marketing communication plays a pivotal role in the effective and efficient management of a business. Marketing was described as a factor that is heavily dependent on communication. The notion of

marketing communication may be applied to any element that may be disseminated to the target audience in order to attract its attention and stimulate the onset of the buying decision process. It is generally important for hotels to substantiate the effectiveness of marketing communication decisions and, thus, there is the need for relationship marketing whereby the hotel or the organisation creates and establishes a meaningful, profitable and sustainable relationship with its customers. In this regard levels of relationship marketing was also discussed.

CHAPTER TWO

INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATION

2.1 INTRODUCTION

As indicated in chapter one, the goal of the study was to analyse integrated marketing communication at the View Boutique Hotel, Johannesburg, South Africa. Integrated marketing communications (IMC) is persistently attracting popular attention and interest amid academics and practitioners around the world. It has been termed by writers such as Burnett and Moriarty (1998) to be one of the most sort after communication trends of the 1990s and also as playing a pivotal role in sustainable competitive advantage linked with marketing'. Schultz, Kim and Kang (2014) supported the firm potential of IMC as both a concept and a discipline and further suggested that, despite the relative originality of IMC in both expansion and practice, it has had a major effect on significant facets of marketing and marketing communications (Múnoz-Leiva, Porcu & Barrio-Garcia 2015:678).

The concept of IMC includes a process whereby various marketing communication tools are employed to convey messages to the target audience. This process is regarded as successful if the various marketing communication tools are used to disseminate specific messages to the target audiences effectively (Zavrsnik & Jerman 2011:531). This is in line with the view of Gronstedt and Sircuse (1998:23) who stated that organisations are being forced to adopt IMC specifically because of the breaking up of markets as well as the multiplicity of promotional tools that may be used in ensuring that consistent messages are delivered to all stakeholders. This process of IMC using multiple marketing communication tools to disseminate information to the target audience is a prerequisite for effective marketing communication and entails sending messages through various channels of communication, thus emphasising the importance of the combination of all marketing communication tools so as to achieve the optimum synergy effect (Zavrsnik & Jerman [Sa] 531). Fierce competition in the market arena has compelled organisations, irrespective of the sector to adopt IMC as a marketing approach. Thus, IMC depicts a paradigm shift from the period of mass marketing to a period characterised by a consumer centric approach. The modern

marketing approach that IMC represents places the emphasis on relationship marketing, database marketing and retention (Iacobucci & Calder 2003:6).

According to Kitchen, Philip, Brignell, Li, Jones and Spickett (2004) several organisations have adopted the integration of their communications disciplines under a single strategic marketing communications function known as integrated marketing communication (IMC). This has provided active support for other aspects of the marketing mix while also creating impact in that it is both effective and cost effective. IMC has become popular globally. IMC has been accepted as the way in which businesses should operate as well as the organisations and agencies that service their needs. Realistically, IMC aims to bring together, integrate, and synergise aspects of the communications mix with the strengths of one aspect being used to make up the weaknesses of other aspects. In addition, IMC uses relationship marketing to reinforce both the relevance of customer's loyalty and the necessity to build and grow a brand's image-based equity.

The objective of this chapter was to analyse IMC by means of a literature review. The first part of the chapter discusses the concept of tourism and hotel marketing in order to provide a context for the discussion on IMC. Therefore, the hotel industry will also be delved into since it is intrinsically linked to tourism in general. Thus, the section will focus on tourism marketing in relation to the hotel industry. In addition, the marketing mix is discussed in relation to the way it applies to the hotel situation. In accordance with the objective of this chapter, the second section will examine the historical evolution of IMC with particular focus on providing some definition of IMC. The four types of messages, namely, planned, unplanned, product, and service, are also discussed as is the theoretical framework which underpinned the study, namely, relationship marketing. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the criticism of IMC by various scholars who are authoritative figures in the discipline.

2.2 DEFINING TOURISM MARKETING

In relation to tourism, marketing first came to the fore in 1969 when it was described as a systematic process that has its main focus local, regional, national and international tourism with the aim of meeting the needs of tourists so as to realise a

certain profit. The marketing of tourism is an active process of planning, conducting research and monitoring and evaluating the activities which are necessary to ensure that both the needs of the customer and the organisational objectives are fulfilled. The key focus of hospitality and tourist marketing is the degree to which these causes and desires may be captured, promoted, and distributed within a commercial context (Pizam 2008:11).

According to George (2001:19), tourism marketing may be defined as the process whereby a tourism organisation primarily forestalls the needs of the consumer and then work towards satisfying those needs to achieve organisational and economic objectives. Furthermore, an organisation identifies these desires of the customer and set out to satisfy these needs in a profitable and efficient manner which satisfies customers on a long-term basis. Duncan (2002:7) asserts that the top marketing priority of an organisation should be to create customers. The organisation then receives a return in the form of sales and this in turn provides profits. Ultimately, this paves way for establishing customer relationships involving multiple which involving exchanges amid individuals and an organisation over time. Communication comes into play here as it is through effective and strategically planned communication that the organisation conveys the messages that it wants to send or achieve a particular effect.

The figure below depicts the pyramid of tourists' needs.

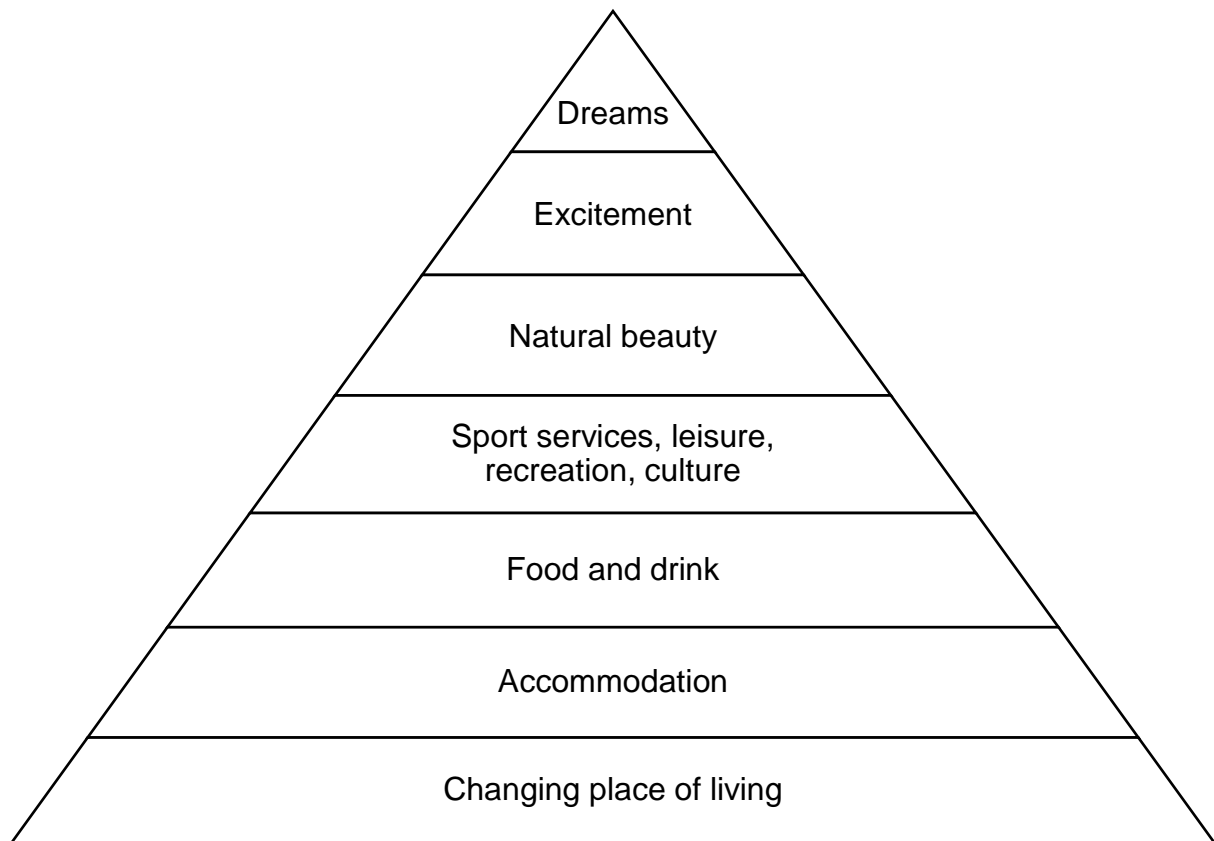


Figure 2.1: Pyramid of tourists need

Source: Adapted from Galicic and Ivanovic (2007:559).

The figure above indicates that there are certain needs or desires that tourists have before embarking on a visit to another location. For example, the first item in the pyramid is dreams. When a visit or vacation is planned, tourists create a mental image and expectation of what they want their visiting experience to be. They then become excited and look forward to transforming their dreams into a reality. In the majority of cases, tourists want to visit exotic locations, somewhere that is different from their regular place of abode, with some choosing scenic locations or destinations that offer natural beauty. Tourists also often look forward to sporting services, leisure, recreation, and culture, while food and beverages are also very important for the sustainability of the business. The most important of the elements in the pyramid of tourist's needs is accommodation. Accommodation is a basic necessity, a place of relaxation and a base from which the tourists may organise their activities. The other element is change of place, which probably arises from boredom or just the need to unwind.

This section examined the concept of tourism marketing and also explained the elements contained in the pyramid of tourists needs. The next section discusses the marketing mix and then the marketing mix within the hotel context.

2.3 MARKETING MIX

In the marketing discipline marketing mix is likely to be the most used marketing term. Scholars have suggested various definitions for the term marketing mix. Marketing mix has been defined as the use and specification of the price, product, place and promotion which are commonly referred to as 4Ps to term the calculated situation of a product in the marketplace. Macmillan and Baron (2004) define the marketing mix as those actions that portray similarities to the overall process of marketing, calling for the mixture of individual elements. In addition, the marketing mix is also described as set of multifaceted tangible and intangible elements to place it particularly in the market place (Al Badi 2015:136). It is clear from the various definitions that the fundamental factor is to attain a vantage place for a product in the market place and to develop a favourable atmosphere for the product in the market place so as to draw the attention of the target audience to the product.

Marketing harnesses both the exchange process and the building of relationships by strategically exploring the needs and wants of the customers and meeting their desires by developing a product and services that meets these needs. This process entails strategically attaching price, ensuring the product's availability through a channel of distribution, putting in place a programme to promote the product or communicate it in to create the awareness and interest as described by Belch and Belch (2012:8). It is clear from an analysis of the marketing mix that it depicts an atmosphere of opportunity on how to develop, present and communicate value to the consumer in order to realise profit. Contextually, create a link to the product management which is vital for all organisations, both profit and non-profit organisations. The process begins with considering what the consumer wants, needs and demands up to the last stage of the product or service. In respect of communication in this context, it relates to the customer data base that creates an awareness of the need for a product from the customers' perspective and also obtaining value, which is the principal concept of customer satisfaction (Al Badi 2015:136). Accordingly, the elements of the marketing

mix, which originally included the product, price, place and promotion known as the four Ps. Thereafter, the discovery that the 4Ps are directed mainly at the seller, and how they were expanded because they were no longer adequate to accommodate the consumers' needs and expectations are explained.

According to Angelopulo and Barker (2013:158), the traditional four Ps is still very prominent with what is operational today. However, additional Ps were included to make a total of seven Ps so as to shift the focus towards a consumer centric approach as it is the customers utilise the marketer's product offering. Findings in previous studies, such as that conducted by Reid and Bojanic (2009:18), pointed out that, more than ever before, the needs and satisfaction of the consumers are taking centre stage and, as such, have become the primary focus of marketers. The 4Ps, which are known as the primary marketing mix elements and that work in isolation, are being complemented in the literature by three additional elements people, process, and physical evidence. The three addition to the complex is called 7P marketing complex. The planning of marketing functions may be used in conjunction with all of the marketing mix elements (Isoraite 2016:27). Reid and Bojanic (2009:18) argue that the 3 Ps were included to suit the changing times in terms of technology, innovations, fierce competition, customers having more knowledge and spoilt for choice, research being conducted on regular basis and more advanced product and services making their way on an almost daily basis into the market.

According to Angelopulo and Barker (2013:159), the addition of more Ps to the marketing mix in the form of process, physical evidence and participants was to fully ensure customer's satisfaction. Process describes every move that was made, methods that are used and the total actions that applied within the border of a specific service industry. Physical evidence is referring to the location where the product offering or service is taken and participants and both the customers who support, pay for and make use of the service as well as other users who are situated within the service location. Furthermore, the four Ps were altered to the four Cs, the marketing mix becoming even more customer oriented. Concerns such as what it would cost to meet the needs of the customers and what it would take to communicate with and deliver to the customers became the major focus of the marketers (Reid & Bojanic 2009:18).

Thus, the product came to represent the needs and wants of the customer while maintaining its previous position in respect of the amount the customers are keen on giving as exchange for the product offering. Thus, price adopts the part of the expense or cost made to meet these needs. In addition to financial values and the time, price altered to include values, add-ons and partnership. The place now become a matter of suitability in that it includes the physical location with technologies, such as the internet enables people to buy and make payments online, being taken into consideration. In addition, promotion became communication the most effective method in which the marketers are able to convey their message to the target market (Angelopulo & Barker 2005:159).

Table 2.1: Marketing mix paradigm shift

Four Ps	Four Cs
Products	Customer value
Price	Customer cost
Place	Convenience
Promotion	Communication

Source: Adapted from Rensburg and Cant (2003:11)

2.3.1 The four Ps of the marketing mix

The concept of marketing could be traced back to the era of economic and business pressure arising from the need to embrace a set of managerial measures in order to meet and satisfy the desires of the customer. Similar to every other industry it may also be related to the evolution of marketing in the hotel industry (Cooper, Fletcher, Fyall, Gilbert & Wanhill 2008:343). The evolution of marketing in the hotel industry was the result of the expansion that the industry has experienced overtime in terms of the number of guests in need of lodging, and the upsurge in competition from accommodation service providers. In other words, the hotel industry is experiencing increasing growth with competition becoming increasingly stiff. Thus, finding and retaining customers is also becoming increasingly difficult and, hence, the enormous move to marketing (Cooper et al 2008:511).

This section discusses the four Ps of marketing mix but within the hotel context. Below is a diagram depicting the four Ps of the marketing mix and what they entail.



Figure 2.2: The four Ps of the marketing mix.

Source: Adapted from Anusha (2016:1)

The next section discusses the items in the diagram above, that is, the 4Ps of the marketing mix, the marketing mix in the hotel context, and how they have been altered to accommodate the changing needs of the customers.

2.3.1.1 Place/convenience

Marketing entails keeping the product at the right place so that distribution of the product may be affected. The place needs first to be a channel of distribution that acts as an access point from which to sell the product to the customers the method employed to guarantee that the consumers may access the marketer's product in the exact quantity, agreed price, in good condition and on time. Place should be selected based on the customers' needs. In other words, it should be a place where the demand for the product is high as this will automatically help the organisation to increase its

profit (Anusha 2016:1). The channel of distribution is very vital as it is the only way through which the product may make it way out of the marketer's hands and into the market for consumption (Angelopulo & Barker 2013:157; Connett 2004:10).

According to Bowie and Buttle (2004: 26-27), the place in the hotel industry is the physical location of the hotel or business, or the place where the target audience may access the hotel's product and service offering. It may also be described as the channels of distribution used in marketing the hotel services. The location where a hotel is situated is a key factor that should be of primary concern when starting up a hotel business, particularly in view of the fact that a hotel's physical attributes sell the products and service offering to prospective customers. The location of a hotel may easily attract business if it is accessible to guests and may also allow the hotel to taking advantage of passing trade. Hotel services are not displayed on shelves like other merchandise. However, in the hotel context the distribution channels do not affect the overall marketing result to the same extent as the other marketing mix elements.

According to Cooper et al (2008:601–604), the most successful hotels are aware of the role which distribution channels may play in marketing and are establishing points of sales both within and outside of their hotels. It is obvious that platforms such as CRSs (computer reservation systems) and GDSs (global distribution systems), which are continuously being upgraded and developed to meet the need of the evolving audience, are now put in place by hotels. Examples of these systems include Amadeus, Galileo and Sabre. These systems have brought about prominent changes in distributing hotel's products the systems have created the opportunity for agents to have real-time access to the available rooms in a hotel so as to effect bookings for guests.

2.3.1.2 *Product/customer value*

Products are developed mainly so that the needs of the customers are met in general. According to Reid and Bojanic (2009:18), product refers to both the substantial object and aspect of an organisation's product offering. This product offering by an organisation may be either in a physical or a non-physical form. The making and use of such a product are aligned as the product will have a different purpose and use for

different consumers and it cannot be separated from the organization itself. According to Sangkaworn and Mujtaba (2015:2), product is described as any tangible or intangible good or service that an organisation offers to its customers. The product may be perishable, intangible or diverse. Various factors such as colour, warranty, design, and packaging may distinguish a product from others in a similar line.

According to Işoraité, (2016:27-28), the product is the initial and one of the key marketing elements. Writers such as Kotler and Armstrong (2004) reiterate the importance of the product as what can be delivered to the market and to get responses, to be the acquisition of used or used and can satisfy the customer's desire. Işoraité (2016:28) argues that in mainly, the literature is dominated by a narrow "product" concept of perception. Accordingly, the aim of the diagram below was to provide a better explanation of understanding of the nature of the product, showing a broader perception of the product concept as a broad concept which comprises not only natural products and services but also the people, experience, places, information and ideas, property rights, and businesses or organisations.

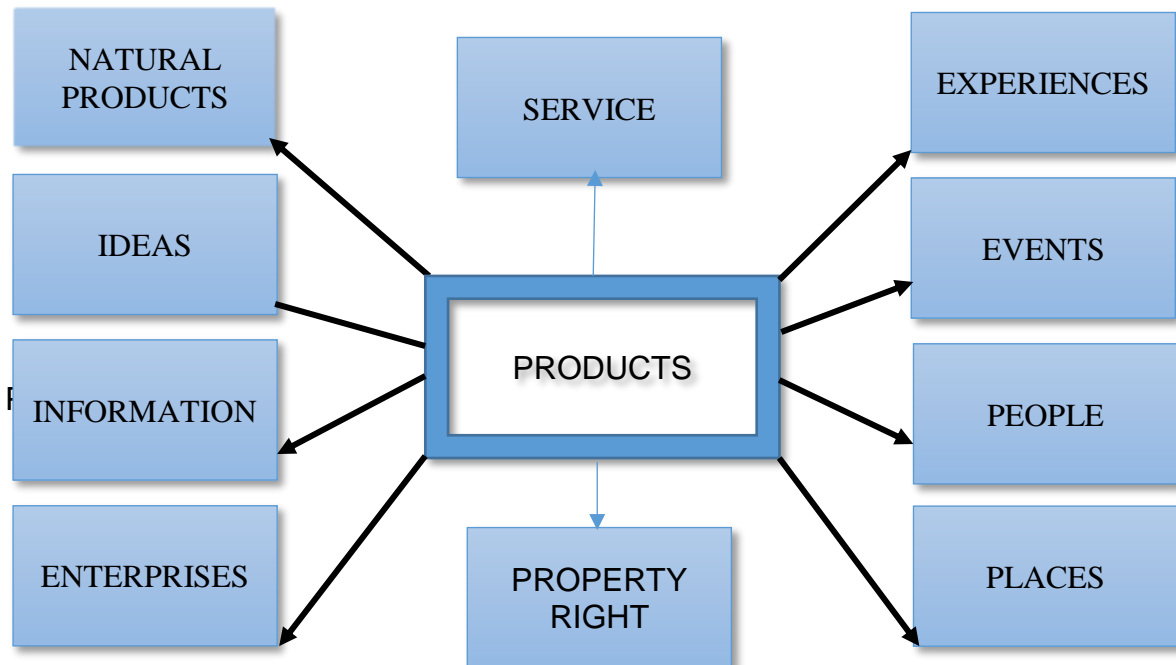


Figure 2.3: Wider perception

Sources: Adapted from Işoraité (2016:27)

One important aspect of a product is that it may cause customers to be attracted and become attached to it. In a bid to create value for customer, Kotler and Keller (2004:74) assert that an organisation should be proactive in developing an offering that is in tune with the needs of the target market. Consistent with the views of Kotler and Keller (2009), in the hospitality industry the room in a hotel may be seen as a product that the organisation offers to the consumers and with the intention to satisfy the needs and wants of business and holidaying travellers, in other words, the guests of the hotel. Hotel rooms come in various sizes and decors. The quality of the service offered is developed to meet the specification of the target audience who usually need a specific type of room. For example, the needs of a business traveller may differ from those of a leisure traveller. Thus, physical attributes such as location and other auxiliary services are important (Kotler 2009:56–57).

A study conducted by Kulcsae (2014:80) on the marketing mix elements in the hotel industry, found that hotel service is also described as the product, in addition the product involves several elements. In Kulcsár's (2014) view these elements refer to the levels of the tourism product and are classified as the principal product, which are the basic service that the hotel may provide, and which includes the opportunity to stay in a peaceful and secure place. The other level includes the quantity of beds in the booked room, comfort, related hotel services and the special services that ensure that a specific hotel stands out from the competition. In the hotel industry the level of the hotel is supported by the physical location of the hotel, a unique image, and customised services.

A study conducted by Sangkaworn and Mujtaba (2015:2) revealed that hotels should assume what they described as “crucial importance” in order to satisfy customers. In other words, in common with any other business hotels should render quality products and services. Furthermore, in relation to the aspect of intangible services, activities such as the check-in and check-out speeds and luggage delivery periods should be supervised, evaluated and compared with those of the hotel's competitors by the hotel's business manager. The products of the hotel are distinctive and different from ordinary products in the sense that there is no handover of ownership of the real product which, in this case, is the room to the guest as the room is used in the premises. It is imperative that the hotel management is proactive making a success of

the hotel and its marketing hinge primarily on a product that is able to satisfy the changing needs of the guests. Examining the pattern of the prevailing market atmosphere will assist the management of the hotel in the product development of the hotel. This will also help the hotel management to keep up with the changes in lifestyle in society to ensure that their products and services do not become obsolete (Sangkaworn & Mujtaba 2015:3).

A hotel may develop its products and service offering in such a way so that they differ from another hotel in the way the rooms, dining area and reception and the fabric used for the upholstery and beddings are designed. These factors may augment brand loyalty. For some customers, this amounts to having trust, feeling secure, and convenience. For the organisation, their priority is to keep the business running and stand at advantage over their competition. However, this is possible only if strategies and/or programmes are put in place to promote the existing product and introduce new products. The opinions stated above are in line with the view of Sangkaworn and Mujtaba (2015:3) that service is a physical activity that one may offer to another and which is essential, intangible and not necessarily tied to anything. Service may be categorised into the following five aspects, major service, pure service, pure tangible goods, tangible goods with associated sources, and accompanying minor goods or service. Pure service may also be classified into people and equipment based. This view is similar to that of McGraw (2006:4) when he advises that service quality is relevant for all service providers. Poor service quality has been listed as the most common reason why people switch from one brand to another. It is worth noting that it is more cost effective to retain an existing customer than to source a new one.

The type of products and services that the hotel industry produces differs from the common concept of marketing. In the hotel industry products refer to the types of services that are offered by the hotel to its clients. These types of products may be tangible and/or intangible, for example, the rooms, dining facilities, the foods, internet facilities, spa, transportation, conference rooms and events halls. The quality of service offered depends on the producer, in this case the hotel management. The services provided by the hotel will always be linked to it and, as such, if hotels wish to use marketing effectively in the field of hotel services, the focal point should be the clients. Both the management and employees of the hotel should ensure that the

clients are satisfied. However, this is not the end as, in the competitive world of the hotel industry, there is an ongoing the need to constantly seek for new ways in which to stay abreast of and even ahead of the competition.

According to Jenster (2005:163), it is easy to replicate a service that is precisely the same (intangible product) as the produce a physical product (intangible product). As Jenster (2005:163) maintains, this is something that dissuades competitors from replicating goods and services. Putting appropriate measures in place will ensure that services are not reproduced, and this these in will ensure customer loyalty to the existing product and also attract potential customers to the service or product. The marketing challenge confronting most service businesses is both to ensure that they retain their existing customers and enhance their product offerings making it tangible to prospective or new customers. This may be accomplished by putting in place recreational facilities and well-trained personnel to serve as symbol of service quality. To this effect, the main focus of hotels should be on providing quality services and products to their customers in order to ensure that their customers are satisfied and that they become repeat customers.

2.3.1.3 *Promotion/communication*

Promotion refer to a variety of strategic communication activities designed by an organisation to communicate the merits of its products and service offering to a specific audience to encourage the target audience to purchase the product and/or service. According to Bowie and Buttle (2004:28) there are various promotional tactics that may be implemented by an organisation to ensure that the customers purchase the product. These include advertising, personal selling and public relations. As far as promoting the hotel business and the hospitality industry in general is concerned, advertising is the most popular form of promotion used. However, it is essential that the advertisement is well planned so that the message it conveys reaches the targeted audience at the right time so as to effective and achieve the desired result (Kotler & Armstrong 2004:77). This opinion is consistent with that of Cooper et al (2008:557, 605) who assert that, in relation to promoting the hotel business and the hospitality industry generally, advertising has been found to be the most efficient and effective

form of promotion, provided that the right channel is used, and a suitable place is selected for the advertisement.

According to Reid and Bojanic (2009:18), promotion assumes similar part in all marketing state. In addition, it is imperative for an organisation to carve out a place for its product offering in the market. This may be achieved by forming an unparalleled brand image and a name, and by communicating the value of the offering by using promotional tools. Clow and Baack (2004:5) maintain that communication/promotion is a method that can be used to send and process information. In the same vein, Reid and Bojanic (2009:18) further define promotion as a situation in which an organisation interacts and create relationship with consumers. It is clear that communication/promotion forms part of the marketing communication mix. It is made up of the following eight elements which are sales promotion, advertising, sponsorship, direct response and database marketing, public relations and word of mouth, sales management, and event marketing, internet marketing, and personal selling. All of these elements are discussed during the study.

The purpose of the various elements of promotion include information dissemination to conceive and constantly remind both existing and prospective customers about an organisation's product offering. According to Duncan (2002:20), points of sale purchase materials, marketing public relations, merchandising, and packaging are also functions of marketing communication. Cooper et al (2008:565) highlight that finding the right balance of a marketing mix is challenging for most organisations. Hotel administration must consider a lot of issues when setting the marketing mix. There may be a necessity for the hotel to integrate several mixes, as the marketing mix is a means to an end. Employing the appropriate marketing mix strategies requires planning, the hotel management therefore should make sure that the marketing mix adopted is sufficiently flexible to remain relevant in the ever-changing world in which we live.

2.3.1.4 Price/cost

According to Angelopulo and Barker (2013:156), this aspect of the marketing mix is strategically determined by both the producer and the consumer. Du Toit, Erasmus

and Strydom (2009:335) describe price as “the exchange value of a product or service”. Thus, an exchange activity must take place between a buyer and a seller before a value may be attached to that product or service. Both parties attach their own value to the product. For the producer this value includes the entire process involve into making the product a reality and also the monetary gain. On the other hand, for consumer, the price attached involves the need the product may satisfy and the amount the consumer is willing to spend to acquire the product. This view is supported by Kotler and Keller (2009:161) that to the customer, the cost or price entails the money, time and psychological costs of acquiring a particular product or service offering.

Price also entails issues such as what other similar product cost in the market, the durability and history of the product and its trustworthiness. Price may be used to distinguish a product from similar products in the market. Price also designates the worth and relevant information about the product to the user. In this regard, the price may also tell if the product is in demand. The higher the price, the more difficult the product becomes to sell. Price in the hotel context should strategically place the appropriate pricing for a hotel’s products and service offerings while considering what similar products and prices are available in the industry.

A previous study on marketing plans for hotels found that the price includes the value accrued to the hotel because of its location, facilities and image. It is essential that the price depict all these elements if the customers are to feel that they are receiving value for the money they spend (Karppinen 2011:12). Cooper et al (2008:589–592) assert that the price is the monetary value that customers are willing to give so that they can make use of the product. In view of the different seasons and perishable nature of hotel products, it is imperative that a hotel attach the right amount to its product to ensure high occupancy rates and, ultimately, to retain customer loyalty. If customers feel that the monetary value attached is too high, they tend to switch to the product of a competitor or look for an alternative accommodation option (McGraw 2006:514).

It is essential that hotels strike a balance between high and low prices so that they retain their customers and do not run at a loss. In the hotel industry pricing decisions are not easy (Kotler 2004:314) The price in this context has also been described as

rate, owing to the precise feature that controls hotel services, the rates used by hotel structures provide crucial clues in respect of the level of hotel services in the hotel unit. There are a variety of pricing systems which hotels may adopt. These include cost-oriented pricing and demand-oriented pricing. Demand-oriented pricing is more concerned about the request for the product prior to attaching the price for the product, for example, “discrimination pricing, backward pricing, psychological pricing, market penetration pricing and skimming pricing” (Kulcsár 2014:80).

Cost-oriented pricing entails the price of making or procuring the product as the most principal element when fixing prices, for example, cost-plus pricing and rate of return Cooper et al (2008:589–592). The prices of products do not always remain the same due to factors such as instability or a recession. Prices influence competition, product quality, market share, profit, and the entire marketing program. Pricing in the hotel setting may be described as the rates which a hotel charge for a room per night. There are two foremost components of room rates, namely, the room must be sizable enough to cover costs and offer a fair return on invested capital and they must be designed in such way that the target audience are attracted (Sangkaworn & Mujtaba 2014:3).

The previous sections discussed the concept of marketing, with special reference to tourism and hotel marketing. The following sections focus on integrated marketing communication.

2.4 INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATION (IMC)

Integrated marketing communication (IMC) has undergone three decades of maturity and definition. It has attained a middle age level of maturity, growing strongly and being accepted globally. In addition, the perception and definition of the concept are evolving, with the search for vital constructs, and early work on measurement and return-on-investment. However, despite these achievements, there is still a major impediment to its full-scale adoption in view of the not being able to operationalise the principal aspects and achieve consensus on its major constructs (Kerr & Patti 2015:317). Nevertheless, irrespective of this impediment, marketers and organisations are very much in agreement about the concept of IMC with the putting together of the several promotional elements and other marketing activities signifying a move in the

direction of IMC. The call for synergy caused marketers to obtain optimum communication effect by engaging all methods of promotion rather than relying mainly on advertising. IMC supports the view that the messages should be consistent and centralised to ensure that the messages which are communicated about the organisation as well as the brands, have a mutual idea and positioning. Authorities in the field of IMC, such as Belch and Belch (2001) have proposed a contemporary perspective of IMC which emphasises the coordination of the various elements of the marketing communication mix by describing IMC as “a business process that helps organisations identify the most appropriate and effective ways for communicating and building relationships with clients and other stakeholders” (Hanekom & Barker 2009:140).

IMC represents a combination of all the marketing tools, tactics and resources within an organisation that is intended to maximise the impact on the customer's mind and eventually lead to maximum profit at minimum cost (Brunello 2013:10). IMC has been described as a process that helps an organisation to create a sustainable relationship with its numerous clients and stakeholder – relationship marketing. Accordingly, relationship marketing has been introduced into this terrain and is the theoretical framework which underpinned this study. Relationship marketing encompasses generating, nourishing and enhancing sustainable relationships with the customers and various stakeholders of the organisation. These relationships ultimately result in the exchange of information and other commodities that are of value and which will benefit both parties. According to Narteh, Agbemabiese, Kodua and Braimah (2013:408), the relationship marketing concept has its roots in creating and sustaining long-term relationships with customers. Angelopulo and Barker (2013:212) suggest that relationship marketing integrates all internal and external marketing activities by focusing on the significance of interrelation relationship marketing.

Arens (2006:241) maintains that, in a market-driven organisation, the main objective is to create happy clients who will remain loyal to the organisation. Customers, and not the products, are viewed the lifeblood of the business and, as a result, there has been a significant shift away from transactional marketing to relationship marketing. There is a need to integrate the various perspectives and move beyond one view of marketing only to embrace diverse perspectives, namely, relationship marketing.

Narteh et al (2013:408) emphasise the need for businesses to maintain quality relationship with their customers as a vital issue in the current global marketplace, and further advise that businesses must build loyal and long-term relationships with their profitable customers. They also pointed out that relationship marketing goes beyond enhancing an organisation's competitive advantage in the sense of being able to offer customers value as it also supports an organisation's market opportunity and assists organisations to achieve high customer-retention rates.

Combining various marketing communication tools may result in more results-driven feat. This results to what is known as IMC. IMC is a strategic communication method that utilises multiple marketing communications tools to create awareness of an organisation's product or service offering, while stirring targeted audience patronise the product or service. The central tenet of the IMC approach, which make it different from the conventional view, is that each individual medium employed, enhances the contribution of all other media" (Niak & Raman 2003:385). Thus, integration is perceived as having a precise and stable image, position and message across all the marketing communication tools. The concept of IMC focuses on advertisement that strengthens brand image and also influences consumer behaviour. The third concept which places considerable emphasis on coordination between the various marketing communication tools, such as advertising, sales promotion and public relations, with the aim of producing holistic communications campaigns, is known as the coordinated marketing communications concept as is described by Nowak and Phelps (1994:51).

However, IMC does not lay much emphasis on only the incorporation of the several functional areas of marketing and communications and, it increases the worth of the different functional departments that make up an organisation (Kliatchko 2008:141). Nevertheless, the traditional marketing tools, such as advertising, public relations, personal selling, sales promotion, direct marketing, sponsorship and internet/online marketing, are still extensively in used in promoting businesses. The concern now is how hotels, particularly boutique hotels, employ the use of multiple integrated marketing communication tools, such as those itemised above, to their advantage. IMC embrace every aspect of the marketing tools available to achieve the overall function, purpose and mission of the organisation or business in question.

2.4.1 Historical evolution of IMC

Since its introduction in the early 1980s, integrated marketing communications (IMC) has evolved through various phases before reaching a definitive meaning and purpose. At the initial stage, IMC was primarily about combining all the elements of the promotional mix in order to create synergy. However, as time progressed, there has been an emergence of a new dynamic in keeping with a related range of activities that should move the business to marketing communication that is more in line with customer preferences (Kitchen et al 2004:266).

A close investigation of the findings of previous studies conducted on IMC, for example, the study conducted by Duncan, Thomas, Stephen and Everett (1993:71) revealed that the need to integrate marketing communications had arisen as a result of numerous factors, including the fact that customers had become more knowledgeable and also had more options than before, thus enabling them to make informed decisions about products in the market, the rocketing prices of traditional advertising, increasingly fierce competition worldwide, the need for organisations to increase their bottom line, traditional media losing ground and becoming less effective, loss of message credibility, decreasing cost of database use and communication agencies mergers and acquisitions (Duncan et al 1993:71).

According to Kitchen et al (2004:266) prior to the early 1980s, IMC was barely noticeable as the majority of professionals and academics in the field of marketing assumed that each marketing communications function operated in isolation. There was, therefore, no integration of the various marketing communication functions. The basic ideas and concepts of advertising, sales promotion and publicity were all autonomous with no consistency in linking them all in business communication. However, some writers in this field did note that a large number of professionals and academics were looking for new ways in which to harness integration. Belch and Belch (2012:10) are in agreement with this assertion. Acheson a writer in this field, notes

that integration provides a framework to consider the larger ramifications of marketing communication by giving credence to the overall functions and not just value each discipline, but also the value of juxtaposition.

According to Kitchen et al (2004:178), IMC is considered by most organisations as a main competitive advantage linked with marketing. In terms of communication, IMC may be regarded as the most important communication development in the latter years of the 20th century notwithstanding the circumstances that its history in terms of its approaches, theory and contribution may seem modern. The approaches used by IMC have gained unprecedented recognition and importance in respect of effective marketing with the rising trend in allocating budgets away from mass media advertising as a result of the increase in the media fragmentation, the segmentation of customer taste and preferences, the importance of organisations being consumer centric in order to retain customer loyalty as well as the importance of creating and establishing brand image.

According to Kim, Ilchul, Han and Schultz (2004:24) the relevance of the communication flow is actively consumer oriented in that it no longer depends on the marketers to provide information. More than ever before consumers are becoming increasingly knowledgeable while they also have information about a product or service to enables them to make an informed decision. IMC ensures that customers' needs are met instead of doing what the advertisers want. This approach has paved the way for IMC to remain strong and ongoing. In order to acquire a deeper understanding of how IMC works, it is important to examine the various definitions proposed by writers who are authorities in the field of IMC.

2.4.2 Definitions of IMC

The early 1990s saw the IMC concept grow in both influence and scope. In recent times the "integrated" in IMC has assumed a deeper and a broader meaning than it had in the early 1990s. When the concept was initially introduced, "integrated" referred to coordinated marketing efforts. However, it eventually took on a deeper meaning, as the need for harmonious activities overtook all other considerations and a need for unified and coherent planning arose. Recently, another dimension has been added to

the notion of integrated, in the manner in which IMC concept is discussed and applied. It is done in full, it is accorded a holistic approach (Cook 2004). However, despite all the stages and arguments that IMC has undergone, its pivotal role is to send a consistent message to customers. Effective IMC approaches allow organisations to use promotional tools and to establish lengthier term, maintainable consumer relationships. Accordingly, numerous organisations have accepted the concept of IMC because of its numerous advantages (Brunello 2013:10). Normally, marketing starts with the marketing mix, sponsorship, direct, marketing, internet marketing, database marketing and public relations were included. Incorporating all these promotional tools as well as other parts of the marketing mix helps to champion a profitable marketing cause. There are numerous approaches that can lead to what is described as IMC. IMC is a data-driven approach that uses outside-in concept which focuses on identifying consumer insights and creating a strategy with the right online and offline combination (Brunello 2013:10).

There are several definitions of IMC, the most popular of which is that of the American Association of Advertising Agencies 4As) (AAAA) which states:

IMC is “A concept of marketing communications planning that recognises the added value of a comprehensive plan that evaluates the strategic roles of a variety of communication disciplines – general advertising, direct response, sales promotion, and public relations – and combines these disciplines to provide clarity, consistency, and maximum communication impact.” According to Belch and Belch (2012:9) the emphasis in the above definition is on the need for a synergistic marketing communications scheme that employs various marketing communication tools other than traditional advertising, and which takes advantage of their distinct strengths with the purpose of achieving optimum communication impact. The definition depicts the importance of both a unified communications scheme and plan as the bonding element as well as the integrative factor of the various tools or disciplines employed.

Don Schultz (1999) and his colleagues at Northwestern University proposed the following definition of IMC, namely, “IMC is a strategic business process used to plan, develop, execute and evaluate coordinated, measurable, persuasive brand communications programs over time with consumers, customers’ prospects,

employees, associates and other targeted relevant external and internal audiences”. The goal is to create both short-term financial returns and build long-term brand and shareholders value. An examination of this definition of IMC reveals that it has three themes. The first theme suggests that IMC is a progressive strategic business process rather than just the integration of various communication program while the second theme suggests that there are relevant stakeholders who are a vital part of the process. The third theme posits that internal stakeholders form an integral part of the IMC process. Schultz (1999) a scholar in the field of IMC, reiterates that the definition places considerable emphasis on the growing demand being exerted on the issue of accountability and the measurement of the results of marketing communication programmes and in marketing, generally (Belch & Belch 2012:10).

Duncan (2002) proposed a more recent definition which stressed the importance of branding and the relationship between an organisation and its customers in driving brand value. This definition describes IMC as a practice that involves the managing of consumer’s relationships that enhances brand value. More precisely, the focus of IMC is that it is a multifaceted process that can be used to create and nurture profitable relationships with consumers and other stakeholders by strategically guiding or swaying all messages directed to these groups and encouraging data-driven, purposeful dialogue with them. Thus, this definition emphasises the importance of establishing relationships with all stakeholders as they are pivotal in creating brand value. However, there is a noticeable a shift away from ordinary attitude to a behavioural change or response where IMC is seen as being able to “create and nourish profitable relationships. This definition has also highlighted the expansion of the concept of the target market to include the various stakeholders who deal directly with the organisation. Thus, sustainable customer relationship rather than creating short-term relationships is seen as important. Moreover, the definition suggests that there are messages that may be controlled (planned) and messages that cannot be controlled (unplanned, product, and service messages).

Comparing the various definitions of IMC as discussed above highlights that, as yet, there is no conclusive definition of IMC, with various scholars and writers ascribing different meanings to IMC and adopting different positions in relation to it. For some, it is a process that must be aligned with other aspects of marketing communication in

order to accrue meaning to it, others postulate that it is a managerial function, while still others view it as an old concept that has assumed a new name. The first definition of IMC discussed above perceives IMC in terms of its increasing call for accountability and the measurement of the results of marketing communication programmes and marketing in general, the second definition focuses on the importance of building relationship and the need to increase brand value while the third definition is similar to the second one in that both definitions emphasise the need for relationship building as an important aspect of creating brand value.

The table below illustrates some of the similarities and different point of views in respect of the definitions of IMC proposed by various scholars who have been or who are authorities in the field.

Table 2.2: Emergence of different definitions of IMC

Author/year	Concepts introduced by different scholars
Don Schultz (1991)	Inclusion of consumers, prospects Behavioural responses Nurture relationships and consumer loyalty IMC as a process
Tom Duncan (1994)	Profitable relationships Expanded audience scope from customers to other stakeholders
Nowak & Phelps (1994)	Reinforced notions of consistency, coordination and behavioural response
Duncan & Caywood (1996)	Focuses on customer/prospects Attention given to sources of information on brands Strategic business process Expanded notion of brand communication Measurability Specified more explicitly the multiple markets, including external and internal audiences
American Association of Advertising Agencies (4As) (1998)	Coordination and consistency of messages and communication channels. Use of a variety of communication disciplines in which to work Synergy based on comprehensive planes IMC as a concept
Belch & Belch (2004)	Coordination of all seller-initiated efforts Setting up of channels of information and persuasion For sale of goods and services or to promote an idea

Kliatchko (2008)	Concept and process Managing audience focused Channel centred Result driven brand communication over time
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Sources: Adapted from Kliatchko (2005)

The definition of IMC offered by Kliatchko uses the term ‘business processes’. This was originally proposed by Schultz and Schultz (1998). In revising his previous work on the construct of IMC, Kliatchko (2005) stated that he was in agreement with Schultz and Schultz (1998) and argued that his previous definition of IMC had been incomplete as it had not included the term ‘business process’. Kliatchko maintained that the expression “business process” explains the underlying factors for integration since IMC is only not focusing on the integration of the various functional areas of marketing and communications but also include all functional part within an organisation. Kliatchko (2005) further stressed that IMC had progressed from being viewed merely as a communication course to acquiring the position of a management process. There is a similar theme in all of the definitions with almost all the definitions agreeing that IMC is a process.

In their study conducted on IMC in high quality hotels in central and southern Dalmatia, Šerić and Saura (2012:69) highlighted that seven definitions of IMC had been revised by Kliatchko (2005) and then later examined by Kerr et al in (2008) in the revision of these definitions of IMC, Kliatchko (2005) emphasised particular themes that emerged in all the definitions. These themes include the organisation and synergy of marketing communication disciplines, channels and tools, the regularity and coordination of marketing communication messages for optimal communication impact and effectiveness, empathetic and launching profitable relationships with various diverse audiences/stakeholders and brands, the evaluation of IMC from communication effects to behavioural and financial results and the strategic management of marketing communications planning. This section explained the various definitions of IMC in order to provide a detailed understanding of IMC while the next section discusses the stages of IMC as these stages pave the way for the introduction of IMC into an organisation.

2.5 STAGES OF IMC

According to Holm (2006:24) IMC comprises the following four stages, namely, “the tactical coordination of promotional elements, redefining the scope of marketing communications, application of information technology and financial and strategic integration”. Holm (2006) maintains that the majority of organisations fixate on the first two stages, a few move onto stage three while a very few move onto the last stage, stage four. This view was also supported by Angelopulo and Barker (2013:187) when they opined that, in order to address requirements of the market place and to tender a more detailed array of services in marketing communication capable of accommodating the vast amount of globalisation taking place as a result of the expansion in acquisitions, there is the need for synergy between all the marketing communication activities and that this led to the development of the four stages of IMC.

According to Kliatchko (2008:153), the stages of IMC, which he refers to as the levels of IMC, make up the process which an organisation undertakes in its efforts to practise integration. It was further explained that these stages are, however, not rigid and nor are they tough and fast with set margins. In other words, organisations may demonstrate certain practices that may cross over the stages. However, in order to ensure the complete application of IMC, organisation must show capabilities in all four levels.

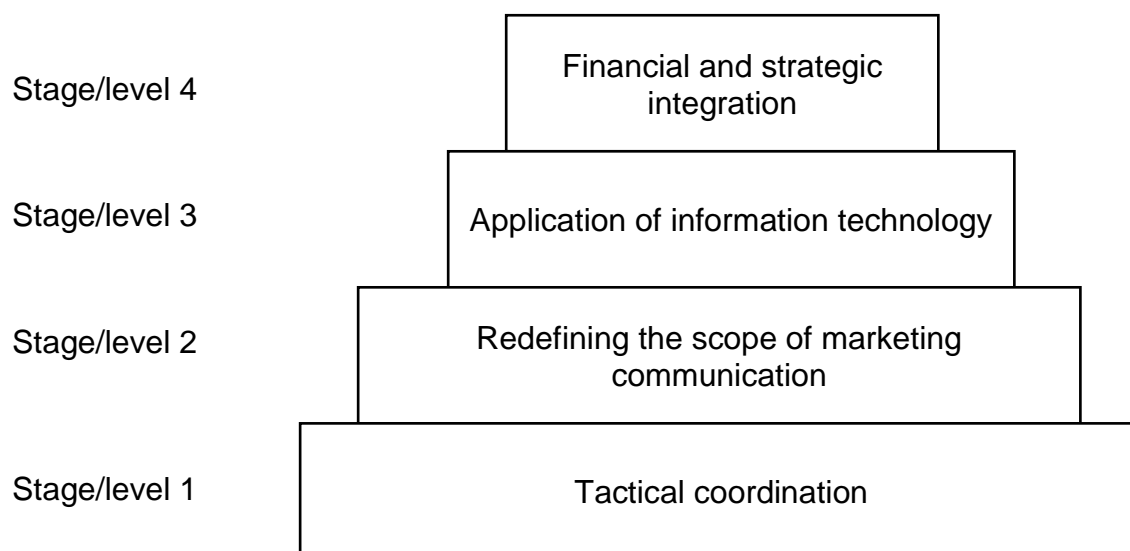


Figure 2.4: Stages/Levels of IMC

Source: Adopted from Kliatchko (2008:153).

Tactical coordination of promotional elements

There is a significant emphasis on functional areas which Kliatchko (2008:153) also describes as content. The first level consists of advertising, promotion, public relations, direct response and special events. At this level formal policies and procedures are not sufficient and, thus, there is a necessity for an intensity in relational and cross-functional communication. The emphasis is on the actual delivery of outbound communication activities in order to attain synergy in the total IMC programme. At this level there is coordination, which incorporate marketing communication tools described as the channels while the overall aim is primarily the conveying and reception of a message that is consistent and understandable, in other words, content which will achieve maximum communication impact. Therefore, the onus is for the stakeholders to get and form in their minds a unified and integrated content. At this stage, integration may be said to have taken place effectively if the intended outcome has been achieved.

Redefining the scope of marketing communications

At this level, also described as channels, communication is approached in a mainly consumer centric manner, taking into account both contact and entry points. The scope of the communication activities also includes internal marketing to stakeholders such as workers, suppliers and as well as business associates of the organisation. Detailed information on consumers is obtained through primary and secondary market research as well as through actual consumer behaviour data with information about consumers being received through the feedback channels that have been created for this purpose (Kliatchko 2008:154).

Application of information technology

This aspect involves the organisation's stakeholders in the sense that the data obtained through information technology is used by the organisation both to provide a basis on which values are identified and to also keep under close supervision the effect of integrating internal and external marketing communication programmes over time. According to Kliatchko (2008:154), it is essential that information technology is strategically interwoven into the communication planning, development and execution of the plan.

Financial and strategic integration

Here, the main focus is no longer on skills and data but has moved to driving corporate strategic planning, employing consumer information and insight. Financial measures are applied to evaluate the process on the fourth level based on return-on-consumer investment measures. Most likely, organisations that attained this level or stage of IMC implementation understand the implications of integration and demonstrate efficient practices in the application and management of such integration. Senior management at this stage focuses on allocation of resource and organisational alignment with senior management putting in place systems that enable senior management members to analyse the relationship between returns and investments on marketing communications correctly (Kliatchko 2008:154).

After the discussion of the four stages of IMC above next section focuses on the growth of IMC after having through various stages and having been established as both a concept and process.

2.6 THE GROWTH OF IMC

IMC comprises of creating a sustainable relationship with an organisation's several stakeholders through a combination of various marketing communication tools. During the twenty years preceding this study, the concept of IMC has matured rapidly in importance. According to Arens (2006:50), clients are unarguably the most important asset of any organisation and, hence, there is a need to continually initiate activities or devise ways in which to establish a sustainable relationship with them. In addition, there is also a need for organisations to be consistent in the type of message they send out to their clients. In other words, there must be integration in all the marketing communication. Angelopulo and Barker (2013:186) suggest that there are various elements responsible for the growth of IMC with both large and small organisations embracing the IMC approach. Some of the reason behind the growth of IMC are discussed next:

Value for money

It is common for organisations to want to attain maximum value for money with a lasting impact. This may result in shrivelling marketing departments and pressure being exerted on margins.

Client dissatisfaction with advertising

If clients do not receive what they expect from advertisers, there may be a shift to other means to create awareness in order to harness consumer relations and improve sales.

Rise in the cost of mass media

The advancement and development of database marketing have resulted in many organisations creating databases containing customer details such as their names, geographic location, demographic and psychographic profiles, spending behaviour, and the media with which the customers identify. Supporters of this approach believe that database marketing is critical to the growth of the effective use of IMC as it signifies disassociation from the traditional mass media marketing towards precise communication.

The shift of information technology

More than ever before marketers are beginning to embrace the fact that the business environment is changing constantly with respect to the clients' technology and media preferences. Information technology is creating an enabling environment for interactive communication and direct buying. The rapid growth in Internet services which are changing the way organisations conduct business may be perceived as a main motive for the growing importance of IMC in the modern marketing environment.

High cost of traditional advertising

There is a shift of marketing monetary expenses from advertising in the media to other system of promotions, predominantly, consumer-and trade-oriented sales promotions, with several marketers now regarding the traditional media advertising expensive.

Maximise synergy

In order to maximise synergy, the organisation should ensure that there is established and purposeful dealings between the organisation and its clients. In addition, a socially responsible mission should be incorporated into the relationship that exists between the organisation and its stakeholders.

Outside-in approach

IMC offers a new approach to executing marketing communication activities. IMC uses the outside-in approach which starts with the clients. This means that marketers start by obtaining an idea of what the clients want by studying the media the clients use, the relevance of the media messages that the clients receive, and the optimal time at which the messages draw the attention of the clients. This process or approach starts with the clients and work its way back to the brand (Arens 2006:247).

2.7 THE BENEFITS AND OBJECTIVES OF IMC

IMC is not merely about a plan or the basic marketing functions. Instead, it is the total organisational process that includes every aspect of the marketing operation with the organisation extending the scope of communication to include everyone involved with it. In addition, this form of communication must be consistent with the organisation's message. This plays a vital role in establishing a lasting relationship between an organisation and its various internal and external stakeholders (Clow & Baack 2004:14). The benefits of IMC include the following:

Consistency of message delivery

The media team formulates the strategic messages that the organisation wishes to send out to the public or to its target audience. These messages are well planned and are in line the marketing communication objectives of the organisation.

Cost effectiveness

In terms of cost effectiveness, both the marketers and organisation have realised that embracing the IMC approach may help to reduce the cost when promoting the products and services of an organisation, especially in the area of advertising.

Better use of media

IMC facilitates the appropriate selection of the medium to use to ensure the messages are delivered effectively to the targeted audience.

Improved working relationship

The working relationship between the organisation and its internal and external stakeholders is improved.

More creative ideas

The organisation's communicator is exposed to more creative ideas by interacting with others in similar businesses, surfing the web and following the latest development.

Increased importance of single brand personality

This may be achieved both by devising new ways in which to use existing products and services and also by upgrading the products and services offered by the organisation to ensure that existing users are retained, and new users attracted.

2.8 THE INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATION MESSAGE TYPOLOGY

The major principle behind IMC is that communication does not occur in a space but, rather, it takes place within a broader context that comprises both traditional media as well as various communication efforts or tools, product and service encounters. The existing literatures concentrating on IMC describes an organisation's method of communication is stems from a sender perspective, that is, based on an inside-out view. Accordingly, the sender which in this context is the organisation spearheads the integration, thereby conveying a consistent message to the consumer (Finne & Grönroos 2009:180). As a result of this finding, marketers have started to realise that, if they want to influence customers' perception, it is essential that they understand one of the basic premises of IMC which states that every action they take or do not take conveys a message. There are four types of organisation/brand related messages in IMC that enable stakeholders to make informed decisions. These include planned,

product, service, and unplanned messages. Each of these messages is discussed in detail in the next section.

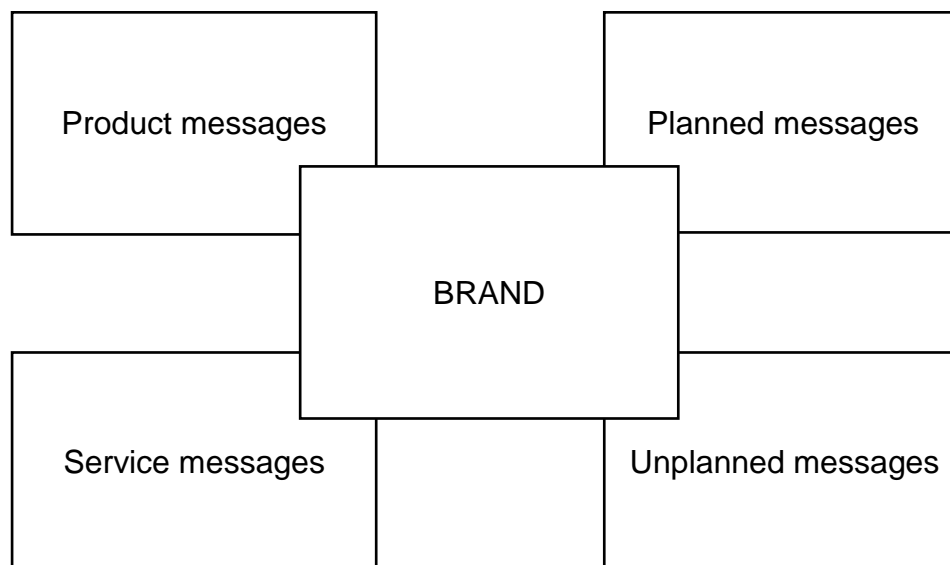


Figure 2.5: IMC Message typology

Source: Adapted from Duncan (2002:129)

The figure above reveals that an organisation's brand image is important that the organisation should send the right messages to its clients. In other to maintain relevance in the competitive world of business, it is imperative that an organisation ensures that the right type of messages is conveyed to its target audience. This message takes the form of planned messages, which the organisation is able to control and product, service and unplanned messages which the organisation is not able to control but which the organisation is able to influence.

2.8.1 Planned messages

According to Grönroos (2007:305), planned messages may be described as messages that are conveyed through a planned marketing communication strategy. Duncan and Moriarty (1997:78) explained that planned messages can be used to enlighten and convince customers to purchase an organisation's product offering. However, in view of the fact that planned messages originate from within the organisation, they tend to be perceived as not credible. Planned messages consist of the traditional elements of the marketing communication mix, such as advertising, sales promotions, sponsorships, public relations, and personal selling Duncan and

Moriarty (1997:78). These initiatives harness the sharing and promotion activities between buyers and sellers with the aim of building a sustainable customer relationship (Brunello 2013:10).

Planned messages may be controlled by the organisation. However, according to Arens (2006:246), planned messages often have little or no impact on the targeted audience because they come across as self-serving. According to Grönroos (2007:303), employees also play a pivotal role in this regard in that what they communicate, the manner in which they communicate, their attitude, service outlets, resources such as machines and their functionalities, in one way or another, convey a message to the customers. The basic tools used to realise an organisation's communication objectives are often referred to as the promotional mix. In the opinion of Koekemoer (2014:11) this is "not something that is set and used in the same way over and over". He highlights that the promotional mix is a combination of the various elements of the mix and depends on what has been perceived in the market environment. In this respect issues such as the specific market to be addressed, economic factors and competitors' actions also have a role to play. Each element of the marketing communication mix is created to carry out a specific task. It would be futile to see one element as better than the other. This view is supported by Angelopulo and Barker (2013:191), Arens (2006: 19) and Duncan (2002:16).

A discussion of the marketing communications tools used by tourism-related entities, as suggested by McGrath, Primm and Lafe (2016:79) and specific to this study, follows. A number of different marketing communications tools that are used by the tourism and hotel industry include advertising, public relations, personal selling, and forms of sales promotion. Of these tools, advertising has been the main focus of scholars with some of the studies of advertising focusing on print, television and radio advertising and, more recently, the effect of word of mouth, and new media including the internet, and social networks. These tools are discussed later in the study.

Below is a diagram depicting the promotional mix.

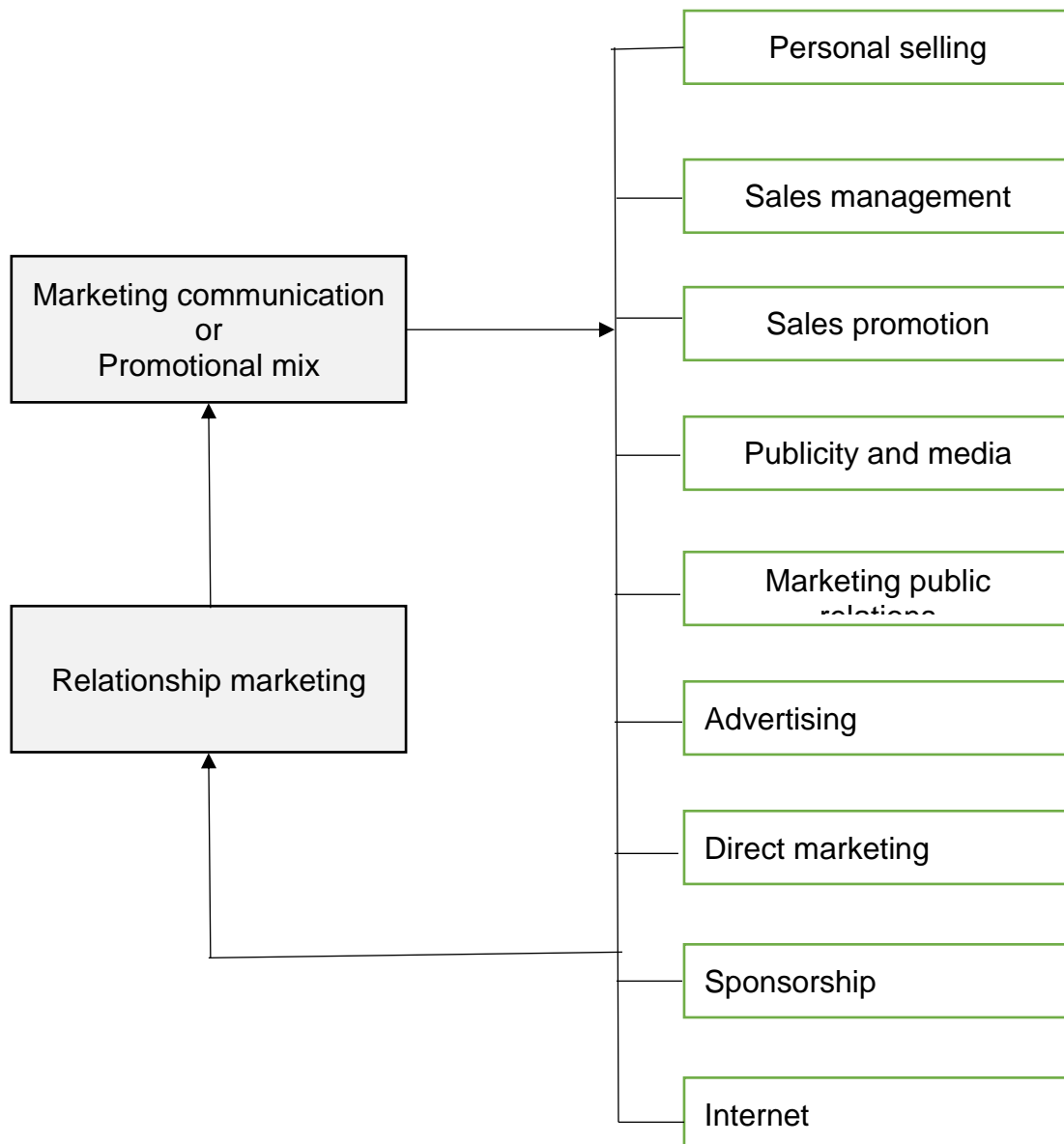


Figure 2.6: The promotional mix (marketing communication)

Source: Adopted from Angelopulo and Barker (2013:191)

According to Koekemoer (2014:4), the marketing communication mix consist of the following elements:

Advertising

The aim of advertising included attracting attention conveying information purpose in order to persuade and to remind. According to Koekemoer (2011: 101), advertising may be defined as any form of general presentation of ideas,, products and services, that is paid for by an advertiser, intended for a specific target audience with the aim of

establishing awareness, reminding, informing, swaying and persuading the target audience to purchase the products or service or to be positively inclined towards these ideas, products or services. Three themes are evident in this definition, namely, planned, sponsored and disseminated via mass media, selected target audience which explains that the message may be modified and, finally, it is concerned with ideas, goods and services such as tangible goods or services.

The above definition is similar to that proposed by Moriarty, Mitchel and Wells (2009:9) who define advertising as a “paid form of persuasive communication that uses mass media and interactive media to reach broad audience in order to connect an identified sponsor and provide information about products (goods, services and ideas)”.

According to Koekemoer (2014:50), advertising messages attract the attention of prospective clients, they inform the target audience about the new product and services, they coax customers to acquire the product and they remind both existing and prospective clients that the product and/or service is still available. This may be said to the benefit or strength of advertising. On the other hand, the limitation/weakness of advertising is that it goes through the different stages of the product life cycle. Advertising attracts attention in the initial phase, it then moves to a stage at which clients are persuaded to buy the product, after which it moves to the stage where customers are reminded of the product and, ultimately, to the stage where advertising is halted because the organisation is reluctant to spend money on a product that may be discontinued. According to Kotler and Keller (2009:547) the main type of advertising includes newspapers, radio, internet, telephone, television, direct mail, outdoor advertising, yellow pages, newsletters, and brochures. However, despite the many benefits of advertising, the majority of hotels still consider it as expensive.

Table 2.3: Profiles of the major media types

Medium	Advantages	Limitations
Newspapers	Flexibility, timeliness, good local market coverage, broad acceptance, high acceptability.	Short life, poor reproduction quality, small pass along audiences.
Television	Combines sight, sound and motion, appealing to the senses, high attention, high reach.	High absolute cost, high clutter, fleeting exposure, less audience selectivity.
Direct mail	Audience selectivity, flexibility, no advertising competition within same medium, personalisation	Relatively high cost, “junk mail” image.
Radio	Mass use, high geographic and demographic selectivity, low cost.	Audio presentation only, lower attention than television, standardised rate structures, fleeting exposure.
Outdoor	Flexibility, high repeat exposure, low cost, low competition.	Limited audience selectivity, creative limitations.
Yellow pages	Excellent, high believability, wide reach, low cost.	High competition, long advertising purchase lead time, creative limitations.
Newsletters	Very high selectivity, full control, interactive opportunities, relatively low costs.	Costs could escalate.
Brochures	Flexibility, full control, may dramatise messages	Overproduction could lead to runaway costs.
Internet	High selectivity, interactive possibilities, relatively low cost.	Relatively new media with a low number of users in some countries.
Telephones	High selectivity, interactive possibilities, relatively low cost.	Relatively new media with a low number of users in some countries.

Source: Adapted from Kotler and Keller (2009:547)

Personal selling

Personal selling is an interactive process between two or more people whereby the seller learns about the prospective buyers' want, thereby finding ways to satisfy this want by providing suitable goods or service and thereby making a sale transaction. This element of the marketing communication mix is a prominent element. This type of transaction has several benefits in that the majority of organisation start off by engaging in personal selling with this form of activity providing an environment in which

the seller devises a unique way in which to deal with each customer. Although it is effective it expensive and, thus, it merits thorough consideration before it is included in an organisation's overall marketing communication mix (Koekemoer 2014:6).

There are both benefits and limitations to personal selling. The benefits include the opportunity for immediate feedback as communication used is two-way communication during which the customer has the opportunity to ask questions. The customer's positive or negative body language assists the sales person to decide on the line of action to follow. In addition, since it is a face to face kind of transaction, the sales person is able to build a relationship with the client on behalf of the company. Customer education is also possible with personal selling in that the sales person is able to educate the client about the product's benefits and advantages. The limitations of personal selling include the fact that it is expensive; if a sales person possesses a poor selling skill this may ruin the whole process and, finally, the sales people are able to reach only a few people at a time (Koekemoer 2014:119).

A study carried out by Petzer (2008:3) on competitive marketing strategies in selected hotels revealed that, for a hotel to get customers, it is necessary that the hotel deploy marketing strategies in order to enhance its competitiveness with other hotels. The success of an organisation may also depend on the organisation's ability to rely on both its skills and its assets in the form of its human resources. Thus, the hotel should capitalise on these assets and use them to its advantage

Sales promotion

In professional marketing terms, sales promotion does not refer only to the activities that are aimed at promoting sales, it also describes the activities that offer incentives such as a trial or continued buying and which may last for a set period of time so as to induce a desired response in the targeted audience. If sales promotion activities are to be effective, there are three types of personnel who should be involved in such activities, namely, the organisation's sales force, members of the distribution channel and, finally, the consumers (Koekemoer 2014:6).

Public relations and word of mouth

Public relations (PR) has been defined as the “management through communication of perceptions and strategic relationships between an organisation and its internal and external stakeholders”. In keeping with this definition, public relations can harness the marketing effort of an organisation by making use of any publicity opportunity it has positively in the mass media since it does not pay the channel directly for the opportunistic exposure (Koekemoer 2014:7). According to Fengyan Cai, Tsang and Nan Zhou (2011:1278) word of mouth (WOM) is an informal way of passing information between people about issues, such as goods and services and social issues. It is also an effective medium if used positively. Now more than ever organisations are making good use of word of mouth to attract customers and promote their products as it is a very strong communication tool. Its distinctive function is coaxing, and the ripple effect caused by word of mouth diffusion.

As Rensberg and Cant (2009:27) suggest, the benefit of the marketing mix is that it garners considerable free publicity for the organisation in question. On the other hand, the limitation is that, if not properly planned, it may result in negative publicity for the organisation that may destroy the organisation’s image. Within an organisation, the domain of public relations transcends just communication between stakeholders as it may be used to maintain good relationships with the various stakeholders. It markets the organisation’s products and services and also nurtures a positive image of the organisation in the eyes of the public. Hotels may capitalise on this and adopt methods to create synergy by bringing various departments within the organisation together to work closely with each other.

Sponsorship and event marketing

This element of the marketing communication mix deals refers to sponsors providing financial or other types of support to an organisation, an individual or a group in return for rights for the sponsor to associate its name, organisation, product or brand and logo with the programme or event that is being sponsored. Sponsorship has been described as a vital aspect of IMC. However, it often happens that the sponsor spends a great deal of money without receiving much benefit in return. Event marketing is an aspect of sponsorship in that it encompasses the marketing of various events

(Koekemoer 2014:8). The benefits of event marketing include the organisation in question gaining popularity with the public especially if the organisation also sponsors charity events. However, the disadvantage of this element of the marketing mix is that the sponsors may not benefit from the money they spend in sponsoring if the event does not go as planned.

Direct response and database marketing

According to Stone (2008:1) this type of marketing is interactive and it utilises more than one advertising media to effect a measurable response or sales deal at any location. Having the database of customers and potential customers is important as this may be used as a tool to measure the effectiveness of the programme. This is important as marketers may have to accounting for the money spent on a marketing communication programme. The strength of direct response and database marketing is that the marketer is able to measure the effectiveness of a particular campaign accurately while the disadvantage is that it utilises primarily unsolicited, direct mail (Koekemoer 2014:6).

Internet (the new tool)

Since its inception the internet has become a global medium that organisations use to address both local and international target audiences. The advent of the internet has, thus, provided new and beneficial chances for the marketing communication process. It has paved way for relationship marketing whereby organisation is able to communicate effectively with both its existing clients and potential customers across the globe. Becoming part of the internet community enables organisations to go beyond “one-to-one” communication and develop “many-to-many” communication. The potential for this media is growing on a regular basis and, according to Lagrosen (2005:64), the opportunities it presents are limitless. The previous decade has experienced a significant shift in the media landscape with marketers having to adapt to the changing environment and clients who are becoming increasingly knowledgeable and demanding more information and technology than before. Prior to this era, accessing clients was relatively easy s marketers were able to place their advertisement in the mass media such as newspapers, radio, television and

magazines. However, clients are now embracing the new internet technology and are, thus, able to obtain information on products with ease (Belch & Belch 2012:12).

Sales management

The sales management in an organisation consists of the sales people with the sales management team overseeing the activities of the sales force. Sales management is defined as the management process which manages plan, and the carrying out of policies designed to ensure the realisation of the organisation's sales, marketing and corporate objectives. The team is responsible for managing the sales activities. ensuring that they are in line with the organisation's strategy and motivating the sales team to carry out its duties. It is essential that the sales management team in any organisation is open to and accepts changes in the market conditions in order to maintain good relationships with the organisation's clients (Angelopulo & Barker 2013:195). The benefit of sales management is that the sales team will be well trained while the limitations include the fact that the managers have to deal with the expensive cost of personal selling and it is time consuming to change consumer buying patterns. This section described the eight elements of the marketing communication mix. The next section focuses on product messages.

2.8.2 Product messages

Product messages are messages that come originate from the customers and that the organisation is not able cannot control but which it may influence. This type of message is often peculiar and also very strong because of its persuasive nature. Product messages refer to messages from the product, price, or distribution. According to Arens (2006:246), to a large extent, this type of messages communicates the details of the product through the use of colour, type fonts, layout, imagery and design that are present in the hotel. In as much as product messages cannot be controlled, a hotel should devise proactive means to influence these product messages by meeting the guests' desires and adjusting its product offering to accommodate the varied and ever-changing needs of its guests. Product messages may only be influenced and not controlled. However, a hotel influences this type of message in its favour by strategically meeting the guests' needs and changing its products and services offerings.

In relation to the traditional marketing mix elements in the hotel industry, certain factors such as the product, rooms, food, beverages, entertainment and recreation, rate/prices, distribution and promotion also can play a pivotal role in the product message of the hotel. There are core element of the product offering of the hotel, which consist of the basic service that the hotel can provide, for example, the possibility for customers to stay in a quiet and security conscious environment.

A study of hotels in the United Kingdom using online customer ratings found that the top attribute that influenced customers' intentions to revisit a hotel was value for money (product) while, on the other hand, customers not being satisfied with the services they received, room quality, and food quality may influence their decisions not to revisit the hotel in question. In addition, utility attributes also influence the rate/price customers are willing to pay to book a hotel room. The quality of the room is significantly related to the customers' willingness to pay higher prices for economy hotels with room quality and the location increasing the price customers are prepared to pay for midscale hotels. However, location and service quality influence the customers' willingness to pay for luxury hotels. Customer perceptions of price and value are relevant in their buying decisions. If a hotel price is regarded as high, the brand personality of the hotel is then considered to be less positive, thus decreasing the intentions to revisit. Accordingly, price may be said to be one of the most important factors that influence hotel selection (Tanford, Raab & Kim 2013:808–809).

According to Kim, Lee and Mattila (2014:890), the majority of customers are of the view that price relates to or equals quality with customers tending to believe that a highly priced service means that the quality is good. Thus, price is used as an instrument with which to measure quality with price serving as a reference point for customers to appraise service quality. Dissatisfaction is, therefore, likely to surge if customers recognise that the price they paid to be high. Customers who are not satisfied are more likely to complain if the price was high Lee and Shea (2015:542) maintain that the hotel facilities such as well-maintained and spacious rooms make the guests happy and may also influence customer behaviour. It is also imperative to emphasise that rooms are the core products of hotel and it is not possible to separate them from the guests' expectation when they make use of the hotel. Also, food and beverages may have a positive influence on hotel guests with excellent dining

experience playing a significant role in impacting positively on the guests' behaviour. A study conducted by Gundersen et al. (1996) on business travellers revealed that food and beverages are an important aspect of a hotel's product offering (Lee & Shea 2015:542). In addition, factors such as music may influence the customers' spending behaviour, the swiftness of customer shopping, amount of money they spend, and the duration of the time spent in a store. Specifically, for the purposes of this study, which focused on the hospitality sector context, the study revealed music in a hotel may offer the guests more affective experiences (Suh, Moon, & Han 2015:730).

In the hotel industry, factors such as the number of beds in the room and the comfort level provided to guests also play a significant role. Other hotel services that differentiate a hotel from the competition include the location of the hotel, its unique image and specialised and customised services. The behaviour of the consumers of hotel services is changing and, thus, the ongoing analysis of their behaviour is important, highlighting the need for hotels to continuously consider environmental issues such as the elements of both the external and the internal environment as well as other tangible elements (Kulcsár 2014:82).

2.8.3 Service messages

Service messages emanate from the familiarity that comes with dealing with an organisation and its employee, agents and products, including the behaviour of the staff of the organisation and the services provided and whether systems and technology used are in line with the organisation's objectives and send out appropriate message about the organisation. It is not possible to control service messages although they may be influenced. Findings from previous studies on services messages have shown that, in organisations such as hotels, service messages may be effectively conveyed using internal marketing. Internal marketing refers to a planned effort that uses a marketing-like approach to motivate, inform, educate and coordinate internal customers which, in the hotel context, refer to the employees of the hotel. This can also be directed at creating satisfaction for the external customers or guests and, ultimately, enhance business performance. It is imperative that every member of the organisation is aware of and acknowledges the relationship between what they do and the impact their behaviour may have on the customer. To this end,

employees should be viewed as customers and treated as internal customers as investing in efficient employees in an organisation, such as a hotel, is tantamount to investing in product quality (Turkoz & Ayse 2008:150)

The above view is similar to that of writers such as Tag-Eldeen and El-Said (2011:154) when they maintain that the concept of internal marketing is important in every organisation as it helps to establish a sustainable relationship between employees and customers. In the hotel context it is essential that hotel operators first address employee needs. Yang (2015:77) asserts that employee behaviour may influence customer satisfaction and, thus, may result in a customers or guest repeating a visit to the hotel. In this regard front-line employees in service organisations play a pivotal role in respect of external customers. Factors such as the looks, conduct and other customer-related skills of the employees are appraised by the customers who also evaluate tangible items such as the facilities and equipment.

Service messages in a hotel would include the competence of the staff, staff human relations skills, booking methods and the payment system used at the hotel, quality of the travel agencies, the hotel location and the physical environment of the hotel. The type of work in the hospitality sector is demanding and, therefore, the staff turnover rate in this sector is typically high due to factors such as low pay, extensive working hours, inadequate training and career development, and poor working conditions. The core competencies of a hotel include good prices and good products, excellent customer service and customer satisfaction. Accordingly, frontline employees perform a significant role in providing the customers with a good experience and guaranteeing an outstanding level of customer satisfaction as they have to make timely and proactive decisions to meet the customers' demand and needs. This is possible if employees are empowered to do this. Empowerment helps to enhance employee satisfaction and morale which, ultimately, translates into a reduced turnover rate and absenteeism, and inspire employee to be creative and productive. Empowerment may also impact positively on employee willingness to deliver a high level of service and help to reduce labour costs as well as improve productivity and raise staff morale (Krujah, Ha, Drishti & Oelfka 2016:27–28).

In their study, Abubakar and Mavondo (2013:843) revealed that the 10 most vital features of effective service organisations are connected to employees. They include, carrying out the organisation's service promise to customers, being allowed to be proactive when assisting customers in any way and, sometimes, in ways that transcend the call of duty, and not having doubts in what the organisation stands for.

In relation to the services offered by travel agencies to hotels, the following issues are considered, namely, the cost of saving, the possibility of buying turnkey solution products, the remarkable flexibility and variety in consumer choice, which are made easy by the competency of travel agency staffs, and that the travel agencies offer generous commissions. On the flip side, the quick services that travel agencies offer their customers, the personal touch they accord each customer, and the reduction in uncertainty and security they provide by taking the whole travel preparation process and treating it personal are among the most important elements that work in favour of travel agencies. The consumers are often exposed to the issue of being bombarded by information overload due to the large quantity of information available online, resulting in their having to expend considerable time and effort to evaluate their options and make choices if they do not have the assistance of a professional travel agent. In addition, users are often unwilling to provide private information on an online platform due to lack of trust e-commerce security and, thus, they prefer to use more trusted feature such as the guarantees, the detailed information of the organisation, refunds, and privacy statement than online accommodation providers are able to offer. Online travel agencies are well qualified to manage trust and relationship building with their consumers (Abubakar & Mavondo 2013:843).

A study conducted by Pizam et al (2004, which involved a sample of 1429 students at 11 universities located in 11 different countries, found that 46,5% of the respondents made reservations for their trip using a travel agency (Del Chiappa, Del-Carmen, Del-Amo & Romero 2016:201). Hotel guests evaluate their experience at a hotel primarily through the five senses, namely, hearing, touch, sight, taste, and smell that are motivated by the noticeable and unseen factors in each service environment. Visible and invisible factors define a physical environment and can have a significant impact on the customer and may contribute to significant benefits for the property, such as an increase in profits. Physical environments are grouped into three different categories,

namely, ambient conditions, space/function and signs and symbols and artefacts. In the hotel industry, a hotel's physical environment creates a peculiar image about the hotel with a pleasant physical environment increasing customer satisfaction. Furthermore, physical dimensions offer physical evidence to the guests in relation to evaluating the service quality. The overall image of the hotel is affected by both physical and behavioural qualities like the reputation of the organisation, the physical state of the property, products and services and communication between staff and customers, all of which influence customer perceptions and also lead to actions such as the possibility of the customer to visit the property again and a willingness to recommend it to others, thus paving the way for an increase in profits (Suh et al 2015:728).

According to Tag-Eldeen and Al-Said (2011:155), unlike in other industries, the complex nature of the tourism and hospitality industries, including their method of employment and labour market characteristics, explain that there is an expansion on the amount of studies that have confirmed that internal marketing in the hotel and hospitality context cannot be overemphasised. They referred to the studies conducted by Stalcup and Lee (2010) in Chinese hotels and concluded that employees such as frontline employees represent the majority of the contact with customers.

2.8.4 Unplanned messages

Unplanned messages are messages that are disseminated using informal means like, company gossip, as news stories, grapevine, research findings, rumours, grapevine and word of mouth. They cannot be controlled by the organisation although they may be influenced by the organisation (Angelopulo & Barker 2013:45). Here, this type of message may affect customer attitude as happens from time to time within an organisation. However, an experienced public relations manager may be able to influence unplanned messages (Arens 2006:246). Unplanned messages are commonly regarded as trustworthy and credible due to the sources of these unplanned messages. Duncan and Moriarty (1997:88) suggests that it is difficult for organisations to control this type of message and that an organisation may only influenced them. The external sources of unplanned messages include word of mouth, social media and traditional media – all of which are considered credible and unbiased. The positive

messages from intermediary sources such as those mentioned above may harness the image of the organisation. However, according to McLean (1997:140) the disadvantage of unplanned messages is that the reputation of the hotel may be at stake if any form of negative message goes out to the public.

According to Nizamuddin (2015:17), organisations such as hotels also use communication platforms such as social media, for example, Facebook and user generated content (UGC), as valuable information resources. Although hotels have no control over what social media users do or the type of information and experiences they upload on their social media sites, hotels have acknowledged that shared experiences play a role in the decision making of potential travellers. However, there may be an advantage to negative postings by previous guests of a hotel as such postings may result in the management of the hotel devising proactive ways in which to improve the hotel's service quality.

Users' experiences with a hotel's Facebook page may stimulate the users' attitudes toward the Facebook page which may ultimately influence attitudes toward the hotel brand, thus impacting on hotel booking intentions. However, researches have not yet studied the process of using the exposure which using Facebook has provided to influence intentions. Although businesses are progressively using social media networks to interact with their customers, with Facebook being the most popular communication network. In the hotel sector, now more than ever are beginning to use the social media platform to perform their marketing activities. Almost three quarters respondent in a survey conducted on social media as a popular medium to communicate on the social media platform as marketing or promotion tool, this is according to a recent TravelClick poll. Facebook was used by 65% of hoteliers, making it the preferred social media channel, followed by Twitter at 20%" (Leung & Tanform 2016:315–316)

The method used by a hotel to address customer complaints plays a significant role in retaining current customers and in lessening negative word of mouth. It is to the benefit of a hotel to understand customer complaints as this may offer valuable insights into strengthening customer relationships, as well as provide a leverage to gather information to use in service enhancements and preventive measures. If a customer's

complaint if not effectively addressed by hotel management this may result in the customer making negative comments about the hotel to friends or family members, changing to other service providers and shunning the hotel. Such a guest may address the issue by directly complaining to the service provider, seeking redress or refund from the service provider and taking legal action” (Kim, Lee & Mattila 2014:886–887).

Planned, unplanned, service and product messages are vital as they deliver all the communication messages that both the consumers and stakeholders get (Burnett & Moriarty 1998:8). After discussing IMC messages and their typology, it was deemed relevant to focus on the integrated planning model of IMC. For the purposes of this study, only one model, namely the Belch and Belch model will be discussed and then critiqued. In addition, the drivers of integrated communication were investigated as it was felt this would provide more clarity to the topic under investigation. Every organisation needs effective communication in order to function effectively. It is essential that such communication is coordinated and strategically thought if it is to achieve the desired outcome. Accordingly, there are usually various personnel members or departments in the organisation that are responsible for the task. The next section discusses the drivers of integrated communication.

2.9 DRIVERS OF INTEGRATED COMMUNICATION

According to Croasdaile ([Sa]:1) all roads of communication lead to corporate value. Either creation of value if done well, or destruction of value if done poorly”. An organisation may measure its success in according to various standards such as increased sales, improved productivity, more favourable regulatory environments and optimised valuations. It is worth noting that communication is a critical instrument in achieving this. As with other beneficial factors, communication involves imperatives such as management zest for communicating consistently, management’s passion, a qualified and creative head of communication, a results-driven orientation in relation to the communication programming, and an integrated approach. The integrated approach to communication is growing in both importance and impact, especially in this era of digitally enabled communication with everybody wanting to know what everyone else is writing or communicating. Integrated communication enables an organisation to achieve its goals by utilising strategies that optimise its communication

efforts. This is achieved by the communication channels which are available for reaching the organisation's target audiences.

2.9.1 Ten strategic drivers of integrated communication

Duncan and Moriarty (1997:15) pinpoint ten strategic drivers of integration of the brand relationship that organisations have utilised, and which have benefited marketing communication. Duncan and Moriarty (1997:15) highlight the significance of viewing integration as a continuum. The various aspects of integration may be used according to the way in which the integration affects the prevailing situation in the organisation. They asserted that it is not compulsory for the entire ten drivers to be functional in order for an organisation to benefit from integrated communication as integration is a continuum. Duncan and Moriarty (1997:16) positioned the ten drivers of integrated communication into three groups, which include infrastructure, corporate focus and corporate processes. According to Niemann and Crystal (2002:12), researchers have discovered that optimal performance can be achieved from integrated communication when it starts from the top and reinforced by the proper infrastructure that removes every obstacle that could impede the application of integrated communication processes.

The ten drivers of communication include the following, namely, focus on stakeholders, focus on relationships rather than on transactions, strategic consistency process, interactive process, mission marketing process, zero-based planning process, cross-functional team infrastructure, core competency infrastructure, database infrastructure and IC agency infrastructure. Niemann (2005:80) suggests that the ten strategic drivers of integrated communication may be divided into three groups. The main focus of two of these categories is on establishing and nurturing relationships and paying undivided attention to stakeholders, thus communication management as it relates to the corporate focus. The idea above further assert that it is essential that integrated communication is practised from the highest rank of the organisation, that is, top management must be mindful of the fact that focusing on relationships, rather than focusing on transactions, is of the paramount benefit to an organisation.

According to Niemann (2005:81), the second category contains the four process drivers, namely, strategic consistency, purposeful interactivity, mission marketing and zero-based planning. This group relates to business and marketing management. These processes are also regarded as the operational processes which direct integrated communication. The third category includes the four organisational infrastructure drivers, namely, cross-functional management, core competencies, data driven marketing and working with an integrated agency. They also relate to business and marketing management. These organisational strategies are needed to create the corporate infrastructure that must be in place to back the process drivers.

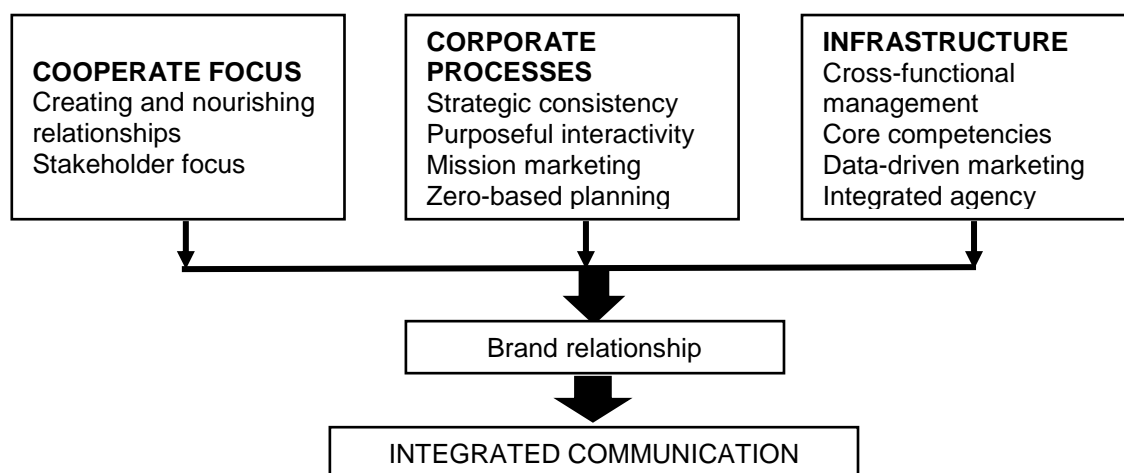


Figure 2.7: Ten strategic drivers of integrated communication

Source: Adapted from Duncan and Moriarty (1997:16).

The figure above is adapted from the work of Duncan and Moriarty (1997:16). It includes the various aspects of the strategies in the order of the three focus areas of the ten strategic drivers. As explained in the previous section, the order of the three focus areas are presented as, firstly, the corporate focus, followed by the corporate processes and, finally, infrastructure. This occur in the order of the focus areas in that it was contended that integrated communication should be centred on the outside-in approach and starts with the organisation's relationship with its stakeholders. The following section presents brief explanations of the ten strategic drivers of integrated communication based on the three focus areas, namely, corporate focus, corporate processes and corporate infrastructure.

2.9.1.1 Drivers relating to corporate focus

According to Duncan and Moriarty (1997:16), the drivers relating to the corporate focus of the organisation relate directly to communication management with the emphasis on building relationships with the stakeholders in the broader sense. The following points should provide a more detailed explanation.

Creating and nourishing relationships rather than merely concluding transactions.

According to Duncan (2001:62), in what Duncan described as the product century, marketing communication is viewed as a process of creating and delivering brand messages with the aim of generating sales or conducting business transactions. However, organisations have realised that, by building relationships with their customers, they are more profitable as compared to when they focus solely on transactions. Harris (1998:4) asserts that organisations have realised that it is progressively costlier to acquire a new customer. In addition, organisations have also realised that investing in growing current customers yield greater profit (Duncan & Moriarty 1997:16). Thus, Duncan & Moriarty (1997:16) assert that it is essential that organisations become acquainted with their customers and use the necessary information in their communications with their customers as this will, ultimately, enhance their credibility (Ehlers 2002:178).

Focusing on stakeholders rather than focusing solely on customers and/or shareholders.

Integrated marketing should not be used just for establishing relationships with an organisation's various or diverse stakeholders nor should it be limited to managing relationships with customers. In the broader perspective, all stakeholders have a vested interest in the success of the organisation and they are affected in some way or another by the organisation's activities and vice versa. In addition, getting the backing of principal stakeholders in the short-term, produces profits for investors in the long term, thereby impacting on the bottom line of shareholder equity.

2.9.1.2 Drivers relating to corporate processes

This aspect is related to both business and marketing management holistically as these drivers should be linked to the marketing management of the organisation and, thus, to the strategy of the organisation as a whole.

Maintaining strategic consistency rather than independent brand messages.

According to Niemann and Crystal (2002:14), having knowledge of the entire communication dimension of the brand contacts and sources of the messages is important as they may impact either positively or negatively on the conduct of customers and other stakeholders. An organisation's status and identity may be said to be well defined if the organisation's brand's position is strategically integrated into all the brand messages.

Generating purposeful interactivity rather than just a mass media monologue.

Interactivity may bring together, and also create an equilibrium between, the mass, modified and interactive media required in order supplement feedback from customers and to access them. With frequent customer response and dialogue, the more integrated the customers will be into the organisation's planning and operations. This means the organisation realises more by listening and learning, that is, greater customer orientation and less telling and selling (Duncan & Moriarty, 1997:17).

Marketing a corporate mission rather than just product claims.

A sincere mission may make a positive contribution to an organisation if it is integrated into every activity in which the organisation engages, irrespective of the department or programme (Duncan 2001:31), It is vital that a mission programme is focused or consistent if the organisation is to develop a solid presence (Ehlers 2002:178).

Using zero-based planning rather than altering the previous year's plan

It is important that all communication objectives and strategies are aligned with the organisation's essential activities in order that if relationships are to be managed more effectively as opposed to altering the previous year's allocations and programme. This referred to as zero-based communication planning. SWOT analysis is employed in this

regard as it refers to the process of planning an integrated communication campaign. Such a SWOT analysis encompasses various aspects such as the brand-relevant internal strengths and weaknesses as well as external opportunities and threats. The outcomes are then placed in accordance with their order of importance and addressed by the marketing communication function that is able to carry out the task effectively (Duncan & Moriarty 1997:18).

2.9.1.3 Drivers relating to corporate infrastructure

These drivers are also linked to marketing management and business with the drivers of cross-functional management connecting to business management, while fundamental competencies, data-driven marketing and an integrated agency link to marketing management.

Using cross-functional rather than departmental planning and monitoring.

According to Aakar and Biel (1993:1), in regard to the concept of the organisation, integration relates to proficiency and the dissemination of information. A cross-functional management process for building and monitoring relationships creates an opportunity to connect rather than join speciality departments and functions, letting each entity to maintain its specialisation but removing the isolation (Duncan 2001:763). It is, thus, vital that internal units, such as sales, marketing and customer service, network more frequently with each other in order to guarantee integration through the sharing of ideas and customer information to enhance consistency.

Creating core competencies rather than just communication specialisation and expertise.

According to Ehlers (2002:179), it is important that marketing communication professionals possess a fundamental knowledge of the assets and shortcomings of the central marketing communication functions. These assets and shortcomings must then be appraised without bias and used in a combination that will maximise the cost-effectiveness of each function. Professionals are mandated in the organisation to produce, while the expertise of communication generalists is needed to plan and manage an integrated marketing communication programme.

Using an integrated agency, rather than a traditional, full-service agency.

It is the duty of a communication management agency to coordinate a brand's overall communication programme. In addition, the agency is also responsible for managing the planning of routine executions internally. However, communication expertise is necessary, there are other specialist agencies that may offer this expertise (Niemann & Crystal, 2002:15). An integrated agency will oversee the activities of these specialised agencies, so that the emphasis still remains on the communication strategy and implement this strategy at the required level of proficiency (Duncan & Moriarty 1997:19).

Building and managing databases to retain customers rather than acquiring new customers.

Duncan and Moriarty (1997:19) highlight that information is an important aspect of integration. To a large extent the method used to collect customer and other stakeholder data, organise and share it, determines whether or not an organisation keeps record of its stakeholders' transactions and interactions. It may be difficult for an organisation to establish personalised communication if it does not have a programme for building and using databases (Duncan 2001:62). As a result of the ten strategic drivers of integrated communication, Duncan and Moriarty (1997) and Duncan (1997) shifted from the "one voice, one look" notion of integrated communication, and shifted their focus to establishing long-term, profitable brand relationships.

It is evident from the explanation of the ten strategic drivers of integrated communication that business, marketing and communication management is reflected in the drivers in order to reach the concept of integrated communication. The next section discusses the integrated planning models as described by various writers who are authorities in the field.

2.10 INTEGRATED PLANNING MODELS

The goal of this study was to analyse the integrated marketing communication at a three-star hotel. Accordingly, it was deemed relevant to review some of the existing IMC models as a precursor to the study. This section discusses and critiques Belch

and Belch's MC model, Ehler's MC model for structuring integrated communications in organisations and Schultz and Schultz's MC models. These models were selected for the purposes of the study because the originators of the models are authorities in the field of IMC and also because they were considered to be relevant to the topic of the study.

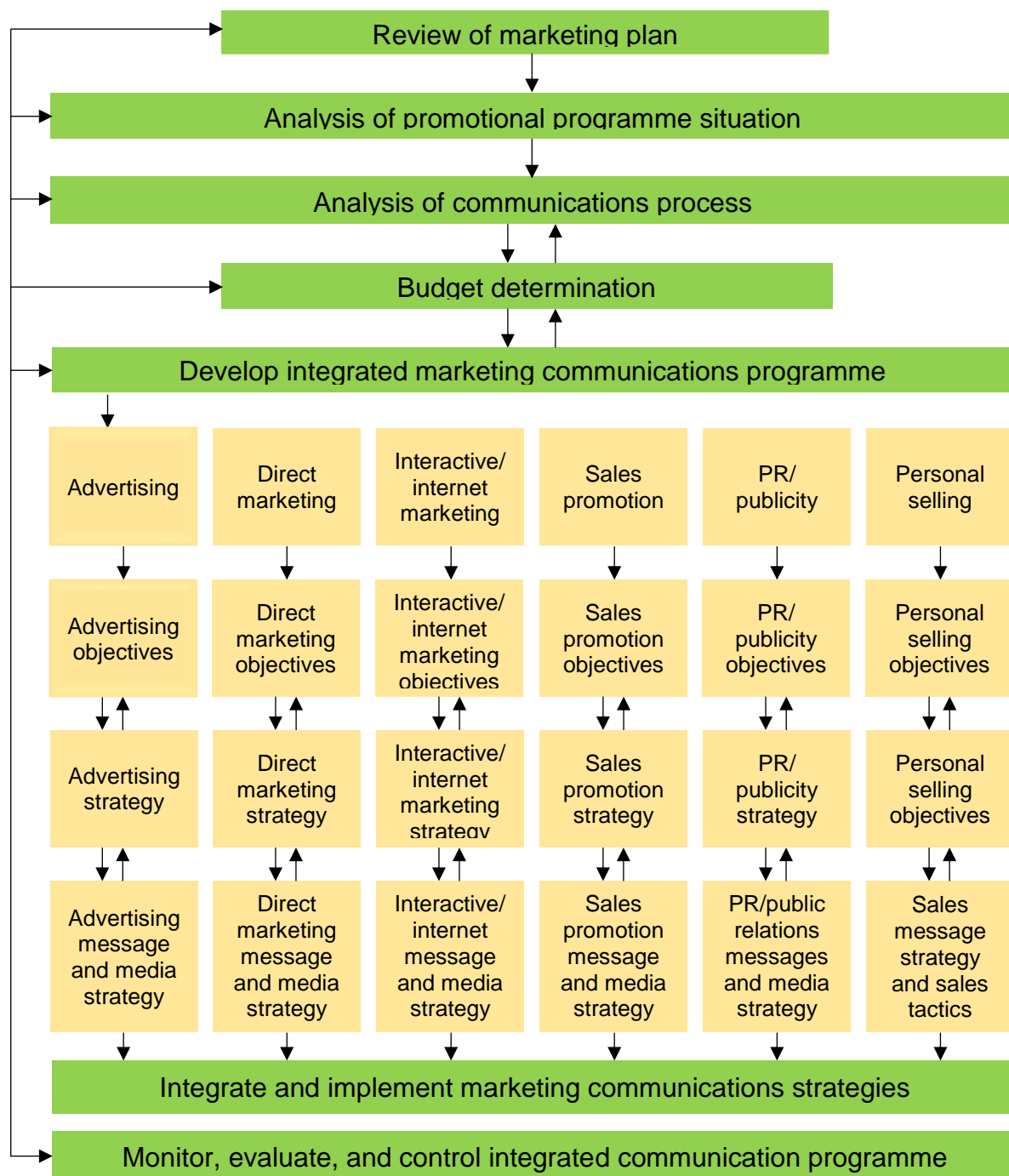


Figure 2.8: An Integrated Marketing Planning Model

Source: Adapted from Belch and Belch (1995:18)

The diagram above provide an illustrative and insightful dimension to the elements of the promotional mix in what Belch and Belch (1995:18) described as a marketing and promotions process model. The diagram illustrates the opinions of the originators of the model in respect of their recent model. They traced the beginning of marketing communications from an organisation's review of the organisation's marketing planning. At this point the organisation analyses the status of its promotional programme, it analyses its communication process, it strategically organises a budget for its promotional activities and then develops its IMC programme. The organisation makes further then identify its entire promotional elements and integrate its marketing communication tactics. This model of marketing communication planning divides the marketing communication mix elements into six separate elements while it also separates interactive/internet marketing from direct marketing (Belch & Belch 2004:30).

Ehlers' model for structuring integrated communication

The main focus of this model is on structuring integrated communication in the organisation and, specifically, in South African organisations. According to the model structuring begins with the stakeholders of an organisation. In addition, employers who are able to influence interactions with the organisation's other stakeholders should also be included in the process (Ehlers 2002:339).

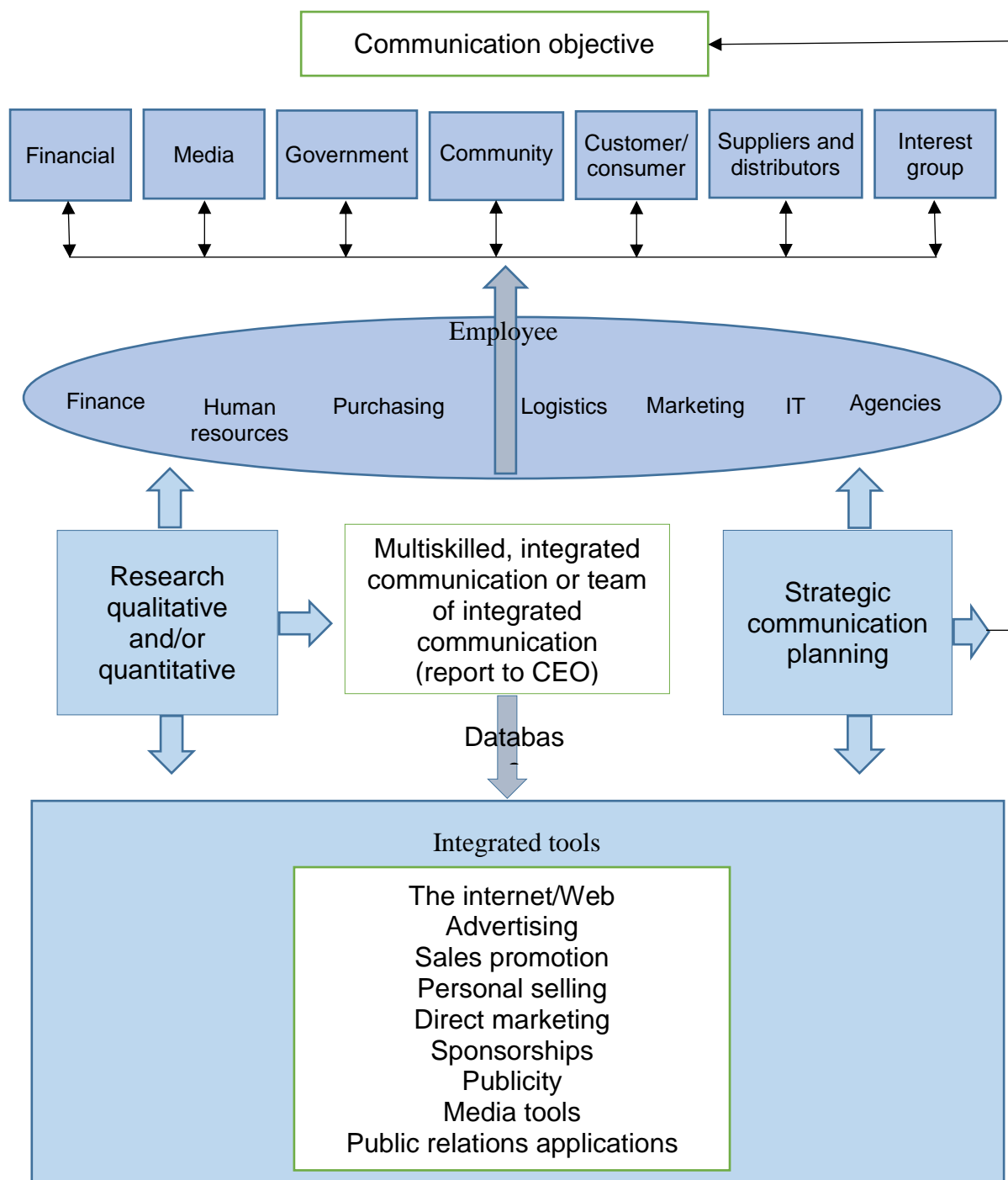


Figure 2.9: Ehlers' (2002:337) model

Source: Adapted from Ehlers (2002:337)

Schultz and Schultz's IMC model

Schultz and Schultz's MC model encompasses five steps, namely, identifying customers and prospects, estimating the value of customers, planning the communication messages, post-programme analysis and future planning.

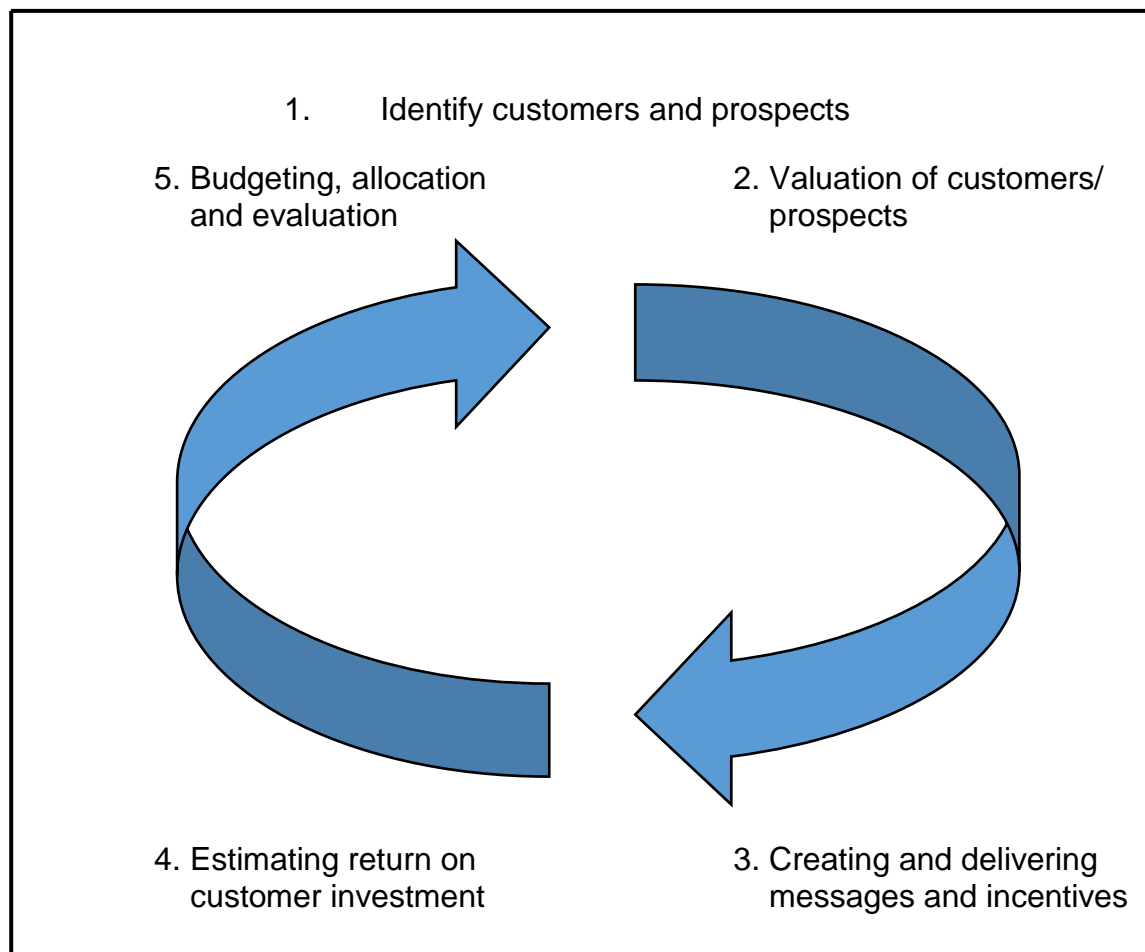


Figure.2.10: Schultz and Schultz's (2003:69) model IMC model

Source: Adapted from Schultz and Schultz (2003:69)

The figure above depicts Schultz and Schultz's IMC model which comprises five steps. Each of the steps is explained below:

The first step involves identifying customers and prospects: This step highlights that it is important that an organisation identify and understand both its customers and its prospects. This may be achieved by gathering relevant information and data, such as demographic, geographic, and psychographic data. The organisation then creates a database of its customers, arranges in order of its products and messages to its diverse target audience. It is not advisable to use mass marketing in this regard as customer needs vary and are constantly changing (Schultz & Schultz 2003:68).

Estimating the value of customers: it is important that an organisation should consider the financial contribution of the various aspects of its customer base. The sections of

a target audience differ in terms of what they contribute financially towards making the organisation successful. To this effect, an organisation should concentrate its efforts on those segments that make a significant contribution to its financial success (Schultz & Schultz 2003:68).

Planning communication messages: emphasis is placed on the organisation to identify its customers' brand contacts. A communication programme which includes elementary marketing tools, such as product attributes, pricing policies, distribution and communication should be coordinated. Executing this all-inclusive programme entails forming and sending of communication messages to the various segments of the target audience (Schultz & Schultz 2003:72).

Estimating return on customer investment: In this step the financial impact of the IMC programme is determined. Communication dimension is achieved on a discipline by discipline basis. For example, each aspect of the communication tools, such as public relations, is measured individually from advertising. However, there has been a move towards a rounded, integrated form of measurement and, accordingly, it is recommended that IMC measurement should be all-inclusive to ensure that factors such as stock market value, customer value and brand value are measured (Schultz & Schultz 2003:73).

Post-programme analysis and future planning: Evaluation should begin at the onset of the implementation of the IMC programme. Evaluation entails comparing the targets set with actual performance. Should the plan not go as envisaged, a programme may be put in place by strategically using the feedback from the evaluation process being used to revise the IMC programme. Ultimately, the revised programme should then be effected with the result that the IMC cycle starts all over again (Schultz & Schultz 2003:73).

2.10.1 A critique of the IMC models

Various authorities in the field of IMC have agreed that IMC involves the synchronisation of the four messages of IMC, namely, planned, unplanned, product and service messages. However, not all the IMC models are in agreement with this

view, for example, Belch and Belch (2003) narrowed their IMC programme down to marketing communication activities only. The IMC models suggest that an IMC programme should be designed to accommodate planned messages or marketing communication tools only. However, a closer examination of IMC message typology suggests that an IMC programme should include all four of the four messages.

The main focus of Belch and Belch (2003) model is on customers only and thus, in the context of this study, on guests only. However, the general concession is the focus should be on both customers (guests) and other segments of the market. When the formulation the communication objectives in their entirety is taken into account, it becomes clear that the IMC programme in an organisation should be structured to incorporate both the customers and the market in order to harness a brand promise or create customer expectations holistically. In other to ensure consistency in the IMC programme, it is imperative that the programme is constantly evaluated to ascertain what the programme or activity has achieved in terms of planned message and/or the marketing communication objectives as well as the targets set with regard to unplanned, product and service messages. On the basis of the above discussion, it may be concluded that IMC is not limited or restricted to the integration of planned messages only and that all the stages in an IMC model should be structured in their entirety to fit the IMC message typology.

On the other hand, Ehlers's model emphasises the need for an all-inclusive integration process within an organisation. The employees may be seen as the experts in various areas in an organisation and, thus, proper integration will happen only if there are cross-functional relations between the various components of the organisation. The database is also identified as a significant force in the integration process. However, the main focus is on the employees rather than on the customers with the approaching tending towards the inside-out approach.

The main focus of the Schultz and Schultz (2003) model is also on the customer. An organisation's success is determined by its stakeholders which include the customers and the employees and, in the context of this study, the guests and employees of the hotel. The main focus should be on both the customer and the employee. It may be said that the three models should be linked to the four IMC messages with an IMC

message typology orientated programme involving activities that address all four messages.

2.11 SUMMARY

The objective of this chapter was to analyse IMC by means of a literature review. The introduction provided an indication of the contents of the chapter. Tourism and the hotel industry tend to work in tandem. Although not all the time. The chapter explained the importance of this sector to the growth and development of an economy. It also elaborated on broader concepts such as marketing, tourism marketing and marketing communication through which organisations may convey a consistent message to their target audience. Planned messages in the hotel context may be described as the messages that the hotel strategically designs to attract and retain customers and also to ensure that they make repeat visits. Hotels make use of some of the traditional marketing mix to maximise their potential. For example, a hotel may create more awareness of its product offering and attract more patrons by increasing its advertising, for example, by being proactive in contacting customers, repositioning its service offerings in the sense that it may offer courtesy and suitable services such as free meals included in the room rates, valet parking and discounts or lower prices. It may also use employees whose duties are not very onerous to act as walking advertisements or even market services under exchange agreements.

The marketing mix, which include the four Ps and the traditional elements of the marketing communication, were discussed before the chapter focused on IMC specifically. The theoretical frame work used for the study was relationship marketing. Relationship marketing help organisations to achieve their bottom line and establish a sustainable and profitable relationship with their customers. There is, thus, a need for organisations to strategically plan this aspect so as to retain customers and their loyalty. In addition, the chapter presented the levels and definitions of relationship marketing and discussed its importance.

IMC, the historical evolution of IMC, the growth of IMC, various definitions of different scholars at different times. There has some argument as to what IMC actually does with some scholars describing it as both a concept and process and positing that it is

influential, while others views it as a concept which will not last. The benefits and objectives of IMC, IMC message typology, stages of IMC, IMC planning model and a critique of the IMC model of Belch and Belch were included in the chapter. In addition, the chapter also discussed the drivers of integrated communication, the ten strategic drivers as developed by Duncan and Moriarty as well as the categories in the IMC concept

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter presented a review of relevant literature on IMC based on the insights obtained from the literature. This chapter discusses the research methodology used in the study and elaborates on the descriptive study that the study adopted. The study used a qualitative approach in order to obtain a deeper understanding of the integrated marketing communication (IMC) of the View Boutique Hotel. As indicated in chapter one, the goal of the study was to analyse the use of integrated marketing communication at the View Boutique Hotel Johannesburg, South Africa.

The next sections discuss the research process, research design, research methodology, population, sampling, data collection, data analysis and issues of reliability and validity.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

According to Du Plooy (2009:51), the research design refers to the method(s) and techniques that a researcher may employ in a study in order to collect, analyse and interpret the data. There are various types of research design, for example, explanatory, exploratory, and descriptive. These research designs may be used individually or else combined in a study to achieve the maximum impact. However, the research design selected depends on the type of study or the topic that is being investigated. Methods of collecting, analysing and interpreting data include observation and interview which are discussed later in the study.

A research design is the plan or the blueprint which is used in a study so as to realise the research objectives and resolve the research questions (Cooper & Schindler 1998:72). This definition resembles that of Mouton and Babbie (2010:74) that a research design is a plan or blueprint a researcher chooses to conduct a research. These definitions of research design explain that a research design provides a direction that will guide the researcher to the intended or desired research outcome(s) on the research journey. According to Mouton and Babbie (2010:74), the research

problem takes on an integral role in the picking of a research design. The research design is the form or framework within which a particular problem is solved.

Choosing a design may not be an easy task in view of the availability of various methods, techniques, procedures and sampling plans. Deciding on what research design is suitable for a study is a function of both the research objectives and the specific information requirements (Hair, Bush & Ortinau 2000:36). According to Churchill and Iacobucci (2002:90), a research design aims to reduce any biased situation from the side of the researcher to an absolute minimum, in order that objectivity and quantifiability of phenomenon will be obtained at the maximum possible degree. Significantly, Malhotra and Birks (2003:58) argue that “a research design places the researcher in the empirical world and links the research questions to the investigation”. Hair et al (2000:37) argue that research objectives may be achieved by making use of any one of the three types of research designs, namely, exploratory, descriptive or explanatory research designs. This study adopted the descriptive research design. The justification for this choice is presented later in this chapter but, first, explorative and descriptive research designs are examined in order to ensure a detailed learning experience of the various research designs that a researcher may adopt in a study.

3.2.1 Exploratory research designs

The main focus of this type of research design is on assembling either primary or secondary data and employing an unstructured format or informal procedures to interpret this data (Hair et al 2000:37). Exploratory research design includes some characteristics or values of the scientific method and is often used merely to classify problems or opportunities. This research design does not aim to provide or arrive at conclusions in respect of the information gathered and from which a particular course of action may be determined. Focus group interviews, experience surveys and pilot studies are all examples of an exploratory research design. It was deemed to explore the various types of research design to ensure a better understanding of what each one entails than may otherwise have been the case. The next section discusses the descriptive research design.

3.2.2 Descriptive research design

According to Blanche, Durrheim and Painter (2006:44), descriptive research describes phenomena in an accurate way. This design may use the narrative style, namely, interviews and classification to document various type of experiences or measure relationships. The descriptive research design seeks accurate observations, and should have as its main focus the validity and reliability of the observations and samples selected for the study. In addition, it also utilises a set of scientific methods and procedures to gather raw data and create data structures that describe the existing characteristics of a selected sample (Hair et al 2000:38). The next section discusses the research design selected for the purposes of this study and also explains the reasons why the researcher chose this method.

3.3 SELECTED RESEARCH DESIGN AND JUSTIFICATION FOR THE CHOICE

The aim of this study was to investigate the IMC at the View Boutique Hotel and to acquire knowledge about and insight into the IMC situation at the hotel. To this end, the descriptive research design was employed to do this. The descriptive research design enables a researcher to provide an accurate description of a phenomenon and be able to provide an explanation of the relationships between variable. This type of research design may be based on procuring new insight as part of a pilot test so as to recognise important concepts, to identify relevant stakeholders, to prioritise social needs, to identify issues in communication and for the researcher to familiarise their self with unknown situations, conditions, policies and behaviours (Du Plooy 2009:51). For this reason, descriptive research design was used because the researcher in this study was not interested in finding cause-and-effect relationships or classifying the problems or opportunities discovered.

The researcher in this study had to choose between various methods such as a case study, survey research, an experiment, a secondary data study or simulation (Martins et al 1999:87). The main research question and research sub-questions were asked so as provide the researcher with useful information. The research process culminated in a concluding statement.

3.4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

There are two different types of approach or method that may be used in research, namely, the qualitative research method and/or the quantitative research method. For the purposes of this study the qualitative method only is discussed as it was the research method selected for this study. The reasons for choosing this method are explained. The qualitative method was selected because it focuses on knowing “the processes and the social and cultural contexts which shape various behavioural patterns” (Wagner et al. 2012:126). Events are narrated as they unfold in the natural setting, and explanations for certain occurrences experienced or narrated from the perspective of individuals form part of this method. This may all be achieved through qualitative research as this type of research employs a vast range of data gathering techniques such as interviews, observations and focus groups. Significant insights may be obtained from structured, in-depth data analysis that may be subjective, interpretative and diagnostic and which leaves an impression (Wagner et al. 2012:126). Advantages of qualitative research include its richness and depth of exploration and the manner in which the data collected is described. It explains that the researcher is a pivotal instrument in the data gathering process. This will then lead to the way in which the data will be analysed and interpreted.

3.4.1 Qualitative research

According to Blanche et al (2006:47), the data in qualitative research is gathered through written or spoken language, and then analysed by identifying and categorising themes which emerge from the data. This method creates an opportunity for the researcher to investigate specific issues intensively with objectivity, and in detail as the researcher identifies and attempts to understand the categories of information that arise from the data. This statement is similar to that of Wagner et al (2012:126) when they proposed their definition of qualitative research as the research method that focuses on having knowledge of the processes, social and cultural contexts which form different behavioural patterns by using a variety of data gathering techniques and acquiring knowledge through structured, in-depth data analysis that is primarily interpretative, subjective, impressionistic and diagnostic.

Qualitative research makes use of soft data. This type of data is presented in the form of spoken words, impressions, sentences, photographs and symbols (Keyton 2006:72; Neuman 2006:8). Qualitative research entails working with non-numerical data (Daymon & Holloway 2011:5). The strength of the qualitative method is the richness and intensity of the explorations and description of the data (Wagner et al 2012:126). The main advantage of qualitative research includes the fact that it creates an understanding of the meanings which people ascribe to behaviour. According to Keyton (2006:54), qualitative research is essential in a scientific enquiry in that it allows for variables to be compared so as to establish differences and relationships. Keyton (2006:54) further asserts that the researcher is able to influence the interview to the desired position, thus avoiding unnecessary interruptions. The participants are the main focus of the enquiry. It is worth noting that it is not possible to overemphasise the usefulness of qualitative research in the discovery of new phenomena (Keyton 2006:72).

Anderson (1987:384) points out that qualitative research includes inductive reasoning. Scholars such as Du Plooy (2011) and Minichiello and Kottler (2010:18) support this view, asserting that qualitative research is characterised by inductive thinking in that the researcher spots phenomena and obtains inputs from the participants by listening to their opinions on a certain issue. This assists in expounding on the findings that may explain the phenomena in question. To this end, the reasoning may also be circular and, as such, constantly delving into data, analyses and literature. Qualitative research may, thus, be described as an established activity that finds the observer in the world due to its interpretative nature and material practices that render the world visible with an intention of changing the world (Denzin & Lincoln 2000:3). Minichiello and Kotler (2010:16) assert that, in learning or in knowledge acquisition, there are various ways in which various people may achieve this and also that there is no one particular way of knowing. They explained further that individuals have different ways of studying the world due to the possibility that each person may experience the same event differently and emerge with different knowledge.

In the view of Babbie (2007:250), qualitative researchers may be seen as being biased in their studies in that they are usually aware of what the findings of the study will be. In other words, qualitative researchers have a preconceived notion about the subject

matter under study. Researchers in this arena regularly refer to qualitative research as imprecise and subjective (Bryman 2008:391). In this regard, it is possible to state that what is an advantage to one person may be a disadvantage to another. Daymon and Holloway (2011:10), who assert that this is an instrumental resource in qualitative research as it adds to the reliability and validity of the subject that is under investigation.

On the other hand, the disadvantages of the qualitative method include the fact that it does not holistically represent the population that is of interest to the researcher. This is based on the fact that relatively small samples are often used, maybe as a result of shortage of interviewers and, thus, it is not possible to generalise the outcomes of qualitative research. In addition, the chances of qualitative data being grouped into larger segments is limited as the information is not structured and the sample sizes are small (McDaniel & Gates 2001:216). According to Bryman (2008:392), the data analysis procedures followed by qualitative researchers are often not defined. The researchers tend to have little or no interest in replicating their studies because the scope of qualitative research is limited and, hence, the concerns raised about the generalisability of qualitative research findings. According to Bryman (2008:391), it is almost impossible to replicate qualitative research because the researchers are the central research instrument. This opinion is supported by Daymon and Holloway (2011:11), who state that the major focus of qualitative researchers is on a specific research setting.

Based on the above considerations, the qualitative design was selected for the purposes of this study. The time frame for the study was cross sectional with the qualitative interviews enabling the researcher to address the findings and provide a detailed description of the IMC in the View Boutique Hotel. Cross sectional time frame describes a research design where data is collected from a sample in a short period (Du Plooy 2009:91). This study adopted the cross sectional research design in that it was conducted over a few months. However, it must be borne in mind that the qualitative research design is cost effective but also that it is not possible to generalise the results. In this type of research, the interviews take place in a natural setting, the researcher has real time with the participants, observations are made and, as the interviews progress, the researcher was able to pose questions to the participants so

as to acquire more information from them. This was useful in the study as the researcher was able to establish a relationship with the participants and earn their trust.

As indicated previously, the goal of the study was to analyse integrated marketing communication at the View Boutique Hotel in Johannesburg, South Africa. The table below presents the research objectives, research methods, the unit of analysis and the chapters in this study.

Table 3.1: Research method per research objectives

Research objectives	Research methods	Units of analysis	Chapters
To analyse the perception of marketing staff and guests about the hotel's planned messages.	Literature review and in-depth interviews	Marketing staff and guests of the View Boutique Hotel.	Chapter one: Introduction and problem statement
To analyse the perceptions of marketing staff and guests about the hotel's product messages.			Chapter two: Literature review
To analyse the perceptions of the marketing staff and guests about the hotel's service messages.			Chapter three: Research methodology
To analyse the perceptions of the marketing staff and guests about the hotel's unplanned messages.			Chapter four: Analysis and interpretation of research results
			Chapter five: Conclusions and recommendations

Source: Researcher's own compilation (2018)

The stated research objectives had to be explored to determine the elements and process of the IMC method in the View Boutique Hotel. It was also necessary to determine both the relationship that existed between the hotel and its various stakeholders and the management strategies in place through the type of messages

that the hotel communicated to its target audience. The objective of the study required a qualitative description of the research topic as a starting point to providing guidelines for a further description of the details and process aligned with the four IMC messages. The population used to achieve the objectives of this study is discussed in the next section.

3.5 POPULATION

A population consists of the complete amount/number or the whole collection of cases or units about which the researcher intends to draw a conclusion (Welman & Kruger 2001:18). The population also refers to the larger pool from which the researcher intends to draw the sample for the study and it includes the elements that make up the unit of analysis (Blanche et al 2006:133). The population has also been described by Bryman (2001:85) as the universe of units from which a sample is drawn.

3.5.1 Target population

The target population refers to the population, that is, the total set of units, in respect of which the researcher wishes to generalise his/her results or findings. The target population for this study included the guests and marketing staff members of the View Boutique Hotel, Johannesburg. It may be described as the unit of analysis in the population which the researcher was able to access (Welman & Kruger 2001:119). When deciding on the population to be used in a research study, or an identifiable complete set of elements that is of interest to a researcher (Hair et al 2000:328), the target population must be identified. To this end, the target population may be classified as the set of elements or objects that are in possession of the information required by the researcher (Malhotra 2004:315).

3.5.2 Accessible population

The accessible population for this study comprises some of the marketing staff members and guests of the View Boutique Hotel in Johannesburg. Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the management of the hotel.

3.5.3 The unit(s) of analysis

Units of analysis refers to the members or the least elements of the population in respect of which a researcher intends to carry out an investigation (Welman & Kruger 2001:48). According to Mouton (2002:47:91), the unit of analysis is the “furniture of the social world” and it refers to the matters or entities to which the findings of a study are applicable. There are different types of unit of analysis, for example, organisations, people, events, social actions, social objects, institutions, collectives and interventions. The unit of analysis for this study comprised individual guests and marketing staff members of the View Boutique Hotel in Johannesburg. The aim of the study was to ascertain the way in which IMC was employed at the View Boutique Hotel. Accordingly, the researcher sampled the View Boutique Hotel in Johannesburg. Sampling is an important aspect of every research project. Sampling provide a basis for a study. Accordingly, it was deemed necessary to explore what sampling entails and, thus, the next section discusses sampling.

3.6 SAMPLING

Sampling refers to the range of the participants for a study from an entire population. It involves the researcher deciding which people, settings, occasions, behaviours and social occurrences to observe (Blanche et al 2006:29). According to Blaxter, Hughes and Tight (2008:163–162), there are two types of sampling, namely, probability and non-probability sampling. However, it should be noted that it was not the intention to generalise the outcomes of this study because not every member of the population had equal opportunity to be chosen for the study (Tustin 2010:344). Accordingly, this study utilised convenience sampling. This type of sampling is discussed in the next section under nonprobability sampling.

3.6.1 Nonprobability sampling

Nonprobability sampling refers to a sample that is selected and which does not have a probable chance of representing the target audience (Du Plooy 2009:132). Nonprobability sampling methods include voluntarily sampling, convenience sampling, quota sampling, dimensional sampling, judgmental/purposive sampling, and snowball sampling. According to McDaniel and Gates (2004:276) the sampling method selected should be determined by certain very important factors such as the level of knowledge of the population in question, the objectives of the study, the financial resources available, the time dimension or limits of the study and the nature of the research problem. This study used nonprobability sampling because the study did not involve random elements and also people were included as participants in the study because of their availability and willingness to take part in the study (Wagner et al 2012:86). The participants were selected from the units of analysis that was available. In addition, the researcher had easy access to them.

Nonprobability sampling was deemed to be appropriate to this study because of the time dimension which was cross sectional. The type of sample was convenience sampling, but it was not without bias as a section of the population was not properly represented because of the way in which the sample was selected using an easy method as discussed above (Bencivenga 2012). The researcher may not obtain the desired number of participants who are willing to participate in the study and, thus, the researcher may have to conduct the interviews with the elements or participants available.

According to Martins et al (1996:252) sampling units should be drawn from a sampling frame. Babbie, Mouton, Vorster and Prozesky (2007:174) assert that a sampling frame may be referred to as a list of the study population while Keyton (2006:119) describes a sample frame “as a record of all the units of a population”. As a result of the lack of a guest database at the hotel, there was no sample frame available for this research study and it is for this reason that the sample was selected on the basis of convenience sampling (Leedy & Ormrod 2005:206).

The samples of the study include some loyal guests of the View Boutique Hotel. In this context, loyal guests refer to those who have stayed three nights or more and have revisited the hotel more than once every year. Most of the guests that participated in the interview were male and fewer females. Accordingly, convenience sampling was used in this study because only those individuals who showed interest and were present at the time were included in the sample. The researcher discussed with the hotel manager on how to recruit the guest's participants for the study. The hotel manager told the researcher to give him some time to inform the guests, as it would not look good if the researcher approaches the guests without the manager informing them first. The manager then informed the guests about the study and asked if they would like to participate. The researcher was then given a date to visit the hotel again so as to meet with the guests who volunteered to participate and also to explain in detail what the study was all about and to answer any questions from the guest's participant. Then dates for the interview were set, one-on-one interviews were conducted with the guests, the marketing manager and some staff of the hotel. This decision saved both time and money as the participants who took part in the study included guests at the hotel, the manager and some staff of the hotel who were available and who were willing to participate in the study.

3.6.2 Sample size

The sample size for the study comprised a total of 30 participants of which three were members of the marketing staff of the hotel and 27 were guests at the View Boutique Hotel. The researcher worked with the guests who were available and were willing to participate in the study at the time of the data collection. In view of the fact that, the View Boutique Hotel is a Boutique hotel with a 5-star rating. The staff strength was relatively small, and it was easy to coordinate in order to gather the data required for the study. The time frame for the study was 8 months as it was a cross-sectional study. This enabled the researcher to carry out the study without further delay. This type of study is also cost effective since the data is collected at a particular point, thus obviating the necessity to travel to a distant site. The topic under study was carefully chosen to give credence to the subject matter. The next section discussed the data collection process.

3.7 DATA COLLECTION

Qualitative research employs the use of a mixture of data gathering techniques, including interviews and observation. The advantages of qualitative research are both its depth of exploration and its richness in describing data (Wagner et al 2012:126). The suitable method for collecting data for a study of this nature was deemed interviews and observation (Terre Blanche & Durrheim 1999:30). The methods of collecting data in a qualitative study include participant observation, in-depth interviews and focus groups (Gravetter & Forzano 2009:22–38). In line with the suggestions of Taylor and Bogdan (1984:80), the researcher conducted in-depth interviews with marketing staff members in order to gain a deeper understanding of the research problem. In-depth interviews were used because, as Berg (1998:61) states, “the in-depth interview could assist a researcher to engage in dialogue with the real person being interviewed and to relate to the interviewee as a human being and not merely a study subject”. Accordingly, in-depth interviews were considered appropriate for this study in terms of the data collection because the research interests were set and well defined.

Interviews create an opportunity for the researcher to become acquainted with the participants and, ultimately, to perceive and understand the world from their perspectives. According to Taylor and Bogdan (1984:82), the main disadvantage or limitation of in-depth interviews is that the data obtained consists primarily of verbal statements from the conversations that took place between the researcher and the participants. Such data may be perceived as being subjected to modification, deceptions, exaggerations and distortions between individuals. In terms of the disadvantages of in-depth interviews and their impact on this study, some of the guest participants who earlier agreed to participate, did not pitch on the day of the interview, some of them postponed, while others had a change of mind. Getting the guest participants in the first place was not an easy task. The researcher had to visit the hotel time and time again. All these factors caused delay and most of the interviews were not conducted on the scheduled date.

3.7.1 Interview guide

The primary function of the interview is that it helps the researcher or interviewer to obtain the participants' perspectives regarding a subject matter or topic (Ritchie & Lewis 2003:138). Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999:30) suggest that, during the interviews, the purpose of the research should be made known to the participants to ensure that they have some indication of what they are committing themselves to. In this regard DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree (2006:315) recommend that "a set of predetermined, semi-structured, open-ended questions" should be adopted for the purpose of the interviews being conducted. According to Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999:129) and Taylor and Bogdan (1984:102), this set of predetermined, open-ended questions is regarded as an interview guide.

Greeff (2007:296) is of the opinion that the term 'interview guide' refers to a set of question sheet which is used to guide the interview by providing the researcher with a set of predetermined questions to ask the participants. Aldridge and Levine (2001:6) assert that an interview guide is used in semi-structured interviews. An interview guide was used in this study. It is necessary to compile an interview guide prior to the interviews as this enables the researcher both to consider what he/she intend to accomplish in the interview and also to review any complications that may occur during the interview (Greeff 2007:296). Furthermore, an interview guide ensures that the discussion proceeds in logical order while also creating ways for the researcher to navigate easily between various aspects of the discussion (Liamputtong 2011:76).

The interviews were conducted during the day on the hotel premises. They were conducted in English. The questions covered the planned, unplanned, service and product messages sent by the View Boutique Hotel. The interview guide followed an order of processes and were fashioned in such way that the necessary ethics were not overlooked (Wagner et al 2012:133). The interview guide was developed based on the research problem, research questions and information on the research topic which had emerged from the literature review. It consisted of a list of general topics or areas or aspects of these areas and subjects that were connected to a particular theme that an interviewer could discuss with the participants during the interviews. The participants were all asked the same questions (Welman & Kruger 2001:161). This method of collecting data was preferred because it is less time consuming, and cost

effective, than other methods and allows the researcher to gather sufficient, relevant data in a natural setting at a time which was convenient for the participants.

The researcher structured the interview guide in such way that the interview started with an explanation to what the study entailed. This also gave the researcher the opportunity to direct the entire process in the anticipated direction (Creswell 2014:186). The researcher submitted the draft interview schedule and the draft questionnaire to the supervisor for approval prior to gathering the data. Ethical issues were adhered to, pretesting was conducted, and the participant's informed consent and permission were sought to record the interviews with a tape recorder. Observation was the second data collection instrument that was used to collect the required data.

3.7.2 Pretesting

Pretesting was done so as to address possible complications with the proposed study. Some of the participants were used for the pretesting prior to the actual research process (Blanche et al 2006:490). The aim of pretesting is to ascertain whether the experimental and control groups are comparable in the early stage or for placing these groups in respect of this variable. The participants were briefed on the stages and type of questions to which they would be responding so as to prepare them for the actual interview sessions. It is possible that participants may answer questions because they feel that they are obligated to do so. This may occur if the participants are asked questions on topics that are unfamiliar or topics about which they lack knowledge (Hair et al 2000:660).

During the pretesting phase, 11 participants were interviewed, as at when the proper interviews were done, not all of the participant showed up. The interview questions were structured in accordance to the planned, product, service, and unplanned messages of the IMC typology. Messages consistency was also included. One participant on planned messages commented that "the hotel is listed on different booking sites, and that if guests book for a room online that they pay cheaper rates than when they book direct". On messages consistency, another participant said "there is room for improvement as information is not adequately and timeously communicated". In the aspect of product messages, when asked about the product of

the hotel such as the rooms, food and entertainment, a participant explained that “the food is nice, the rooms are nice and clean and are well decorated. But regarding entertainment, another participant commented that “I will score the hotel Zero because, I have not seen anything done here that one can call entertainment”. On message consistency, a participant said “it is left for the hotel team to work together and come up with something concrete”.

When it comes to service messages of the hotel, majority of the participants agreed that the staff of the hotel were very good. As one participant puts it, “the staff are very helpful and kind”. They are always will to assist. Messages consistency in this regard a participant commented that “there is not much consistency with the travel agency that the hotel works with”. The unplanned messages of the hotel, a participant said that “I got to know about the hotel from a relative, and everything I was told about the hotel is the truth. I came, and I saw, and I have used the hotel on so many occasions”. On message consistency, another participant commented that “if meetings are held frequently, that operations in the hotel will take a better turn”.

Pretesting is vital as it helps the researcher to avoid forming several types of instruments for different participants (Welman & Kruger 2001:171). During the pretesting the researcher made sure that the interview was not too time consuming, that the number of questions asked was limited and that the questions were concise, to the point and at a level that the participants could understand. The participants were interviewed. The interview guide was revised after the pre-testing interviews. Pretesting provides the participants with the chance to deliberate on any issues that were of concern to them with the researcher. The next session focused on data analysis.

3.8 DATA ANALYSIS

Effective qualitative research should enable the researcher to draw interpretations. In addition, the data that is collected should be consistent. Accordingly, a study such as this usually employs thematic analysis to analyse the data that were collected. The advantage of thematic analysis is that it enables the researcher to be aware and recognise certain factors or variables that influence any issue to which the participants

have referred. Thus, the participants' interpretations are significant, with thematic analysis providing the most appropriate clarifications for the participants' conducts, actions and views and these attributes are in order with the features that are involved in the process of thematic analysis (Ibrahim 2012:40–41).

Braun and Clarke (2006:6), defines thematic analysis as an approach that can be used to identify, analyse, and give an account of patterns themes within data. It simply organises and describes data set in rich detail. However, it also can be expanded to interpret different aspects of the research topic. Thematic analysis has also been referred to as a qualitative descriptive method that provides central skills to researchers for conducting various forms of qualitative analysis. It is important that qualitative researchers familiarise themselves with thematic analysis as both an independent and a dependable qualitative approach to data analysis. Thematic analysis is a flexible and valuable research instrument which provides a rich and detailed, yet complex, account of the data. Thematic analysis involves the search for and identification of recurring patterns that extend across an entire interview or set of interviews (Vaismoradi, Turunen & Bondas 2013:400).

According to Braun and Clarke (2006:16–23), there are six phases that a researcher should go through when conducting a thematic analysis. They include the following:

Phase 1: Familiarising yourself with your data

During the initial phase the researcher collects the requisite data if he/she has not already received it. If the data was collected through interactive means, then the researcher would have had to have some prior knowledge of the data and, possibly, some initial analytical thoughts about it. However, irrespective of the situation, it is important that the researcher immerse him/herself in the data, reading and rereading it and, at the same time, looking for meanings and patterns. It is helpful to read through the complete data set at least once before coding begins as this will help in the forming of ideas and the identification of possible patterns. It is suggested that the researcher make notes or mark ideas for the coding to which the researcher will revert as the activities progress. In addition, if the researcher is working with verbal data, such as the data from interviews, the data will have to be transcribed into written form before the thematic analysis is conducted. Although time consuming, transcribing the data

does familiarise the researcher with the data. In line with recommendations of Braun and Clarke (2006) after collecting the data, the researcher read through the data repeatedly content, making notes, and also played the audio records repeatedly. This process helped the researcher to familiarise one's self with the data, form ideas, pick up recurring patterns and generate codes.

Phase 2: Generating initial codes

During this phase the initial codes are generated from the data. It is important that the codes identify a feature of the data that the analyst feels is significant. Codes refer to the most elementary aspect, or element, of the raw data or information that can be assessed in a meaningful way regarding the phenomenon. The coding process is part of analysis process as the data is organised into meaningful categories. It is worth noting that coded data is different from the themes which are often extensive. The interpretative analysis of the data takes place in the next phase when the themes are developed. In addition, it is during this phase that arguments about the phenomena under investigation are formulated. In essence, coding depends on whether the themes are more data-driven or more theoretical. If the themes are more data driven, the ideal way in which to approach the data would be with specific questions in mind that would elicit the code required. It also depends on whether the researcher intend to code the content of the entire data set or whether the aim of the coding is to pinpoint a particular and, perhaps, inadequate features of the data set. Coding may either be carried out manually or through a software programme. If coding is done manually, as was the case in this study, the data may be coded by making notes on the texts that are being analysed, by using coloured pens to highlight potential patterns, or by making notes to identify specific segments of data. It is recommended that the researcher code as many potential themes/patterns as possible, depending on the time available. For the purposes of this study, the researcher chose manual coding, and making notes of as many meaningful themes as possible that kept recurring.

Phase 3: Searching for themes

The third phase starts once the entire data set has been initially coded and collated. This phase is about grouping the various codes into potential themes and organising the entire relevant coded data extracts within the themes which have been identified. It is at this point that the codes are analysed. The researcher uses tables of visual objects, and mind-maps. The researcher may write the name of each code down and start planning how to organise the codes into themes.

Phase 4: Reviewing themes

Phase four starts once a set of possible themes has been devised. This process involves refining these themes. It is noticeable that, during this phase, some of the candidate themes will not constitute actual themes, either because there is not sufficient data to back them, or the data is too diverse. The themes are reviewed firstly at the level of the coded data extracts by reading the entire collated extracts for each theme and, secondly, by reading through the entire data set to establish whether the themes work in relation to the data set and to code any other data within themes that has been missed in earlier coding stages". It is also advisable to further review and refine the coding until the desired thematic map has been achieved. In this study, at this stage, the researcher rereading all the data and ascertained what the real themes were. These themes were then reviewed and refined until the researcher was satisfied with the outcome.

Phase 5: Defining and naming themes

This phase starts once the researcher is contented with the thematic map of the data. The researcher again refines and defines the themes to identify the essence of what each individual them means, to determine the part of the data which each theme captures that will be presented for analysis, and also to analyse the data within each theme. The researcher then writes down a thorough analysis of each distinct theme. This should provide a narrative in relation to the research questions.

Phase 6: Producing the report

Phase 6 involves the completed themes, the concluding analysis and the write-up of the report. As such it involves narrating the complicated process of the data in a convincing manner to the reader about the merit and validity of the analysis. "The write-up of it, including data extracts, delivers a concise, coherent, logical, nonrepetitive, and interesting account of the story the data tell – within and across themes". Extracts must be rooted within an analytical narrative that depicts, in a compelling way, the story that is been narrated about the data enables the researcher to formulate an argument in relation to the study's research question(s).

Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999:141) suggest that the data may be analysed by the researcher looking for reoccurring themes as he/she reads the field notes and transcripts repeatedly. The data analysis and interpretation in a qualitative study, such as this study, require identifying the themes or patterns in the data but do not involve quantification of the data (Wagner et al 2012:231). The basis on this approach is to uncover the hidden meaning of the content as the content is grouped into themes and what is already obvious is not stated. This implies that a reliable measuring instrument or analytical scheme in respect of drawing an accurate and representative sample and treating the units of analyses equally is important and must be taken into consideration (Du Plooy 2009:220). The section above provided an explanation of the data analysis process that was utilised in the study while the next section focuses on the issue of reliability and validity as this should give credence to the study.

3.9 ISSUES OF RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

Reliability in the research context refers to the intensity of the researcher reliance on the information which has been gathered through the use of an instrument. For example, the questionnaires, used to collect the required data for the study in question. In a qualitative study, such as this study, the focus is on the dependability and credibility of the measures that was used, the appropriate measures that was involved in the interpretation, and the confidence in the outcome of the study (Du Plooy 2009:133). Inviting someone who have no link or interest in the study to act as a judge will establish if the correct protocols were observed in conducting a thematic analysis of documents or combining observation and interviews. In order to ensure consistency in this study, the same questions were administered to the same set of participants at various points in time and the same results were obtained.

Three methods can be used to measure validity, and they are, content, criterion and construct. Content deals with a situation whereby the content of the items is compared in the researcher's measurement instruments in the relevant content area. In terms of criterion, the performance of the measurement will be compared against a predetermined set of criteria by the researcher, this can be achieved by foretelling the outcome of the conceptualisation of the construct. Construct is about the extent to

which the operationalisation of the researcher's constructs affects the real theoretical constructs which the researcher is aiming to measure (Wagner et al 2012:81).

The validity of this study was ensured by the researcher asking expert, credible academics in the field and marketing communicators to inspect the research tools used in the study and give their input. This enables the researcher to ensure that the research tool covered the complete content area and that the interview guide included a representative sample of the content that was to be assessed. It was also necessary for the researcher to employ the applicable format when developing the instrument. This was done in order to ensure that the research tool used was capable of obtaining the relevant information from the various participants in the study.

3.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The researcher made sure that ethical considerations were prioritised during all the phases of the research process – from the beginning of the study to the stage where the actual field work was carried out to the final draft of the study. Several issues about the participants were attended to with the utmost care. The principal aspects of ethical research were taken into account both before and during the study. Aspects such as the informed consent of the participants and confidentiality were adhered to by the researcher. The researcher also applied for and obtained an ethical clearance certificate (Appendix D). In addition, the researcher ensured that the guidelines and procedures set by the research institution's code of ethics and any other research ethics that applied to the study were observed (Wagner et al 2012:71).

3.10.1 Confidentiality

The protection of the participants' identity is an important issue in relation to ethics in research. Confidentiality means that the researcher must not give away the identities of the participants, even when it is obvious that he knows it. The researcher must also establish a relationship of trust with the participants and promise not to convey any of the information that has been given to the researcher by the participants to any unauthorised person (Wagner et al 2012:70). To this end, the researcher in this study did not disclose the identity of the participants. Their identities were protected by not

using their actual names, addresses, and ages of the participants in the report. The descriptions of the participants ambiguous.

3.10.2 Informed consent

The informed consent of the participants is pivotal in research due to ethical consideration. The researcher in this study provided the participants with adequate and relevant information on the research topic, thus enabling the participants to make an informed decision about whether or not they wanted to take part in the study. There is usually an informed consent form that the participants sign. The guidelines include a participant's personal right to consent to participate in a study. The informed consent document was in accordance with the basic principles of informed consent, including a participant's right to opt out of a study at any time. The entire process was voluntary. In view of the fact that it is possible that participating in a study may affect the participant's emotional or physical welfare. The researcher made sure that the guiding principles were followed.

The goals and objectives of the study were restated in the section of the research design. The chapter elaborated on the population, sampling method, data collection and data analysis, as they pertained to the study, as well as reliability and validity. A summary of the chapter was provided. A qualitative research design was selected for the purposes of the study. Sampling design was also discussed with reference to the sampling methods, unit of analysis and target population of the study. The data collection methods used were interview guide and observation, and a discussion on that was provided. Finally, pretesting, issues of validity and reliability and ethical considerations that must be taken into account during research was discussed.

3.11 SUMMARY

This chapter discussed the research design, research method, ethical considerations, confidentiality, reliability and validity, and thematic analysis as they pertained to the study. The use of thematic analysis is deemed to be fundamental. However, irrespective of this perception, it still does automatically imply that the outcome is not sufficiently strong, or the quality is low but, instead, it is it could be that the underlying themes were not immediately discovered. It is, thus, essential that the researcher

review the data frequently from different angles and go through the various stages of data analysis once again. Thematic analysis may be described as an independent approach within the qualitative descriptive methodology. It has been explained that explaining the boundaries between the various qualitative approaches may enhance the logic and consistency of qualitative research. Thus, clearly describing the type of approach used in a study may create an acceptable language for researchers and reinforce the background of any approach to research. In addition, such a distinction between approaches provides clarity to the data analysis process and, and ultimately increases its rigour. This chapter discussed the methodology that was employed to conduct a qualitative analysis of IMC at the View Boutique Hotel, Johannesburg. Although it was not possible to generalise the findings, however, it was hoped that the study findings would enable the hotel management to take the necessary steps to address the marketing communication challenges confronting the hotel and forge a new and effective business pattern that would impact positively on the hotel's business. It was felt that the management of the hotel would be able to do this by rethinking the existing IMC used in the hotel. It is also worth mentioning that the sample that was used for the study included only those participants who were willing to take part in the study and who were available as at the times the interviews were conducted and, thus, it may be claimed that convenient sampling was used.

The majority of the discussion in the research included the research design as a research design is the foundation or blueprint for achieving the research objectives and answering the research question. The chapter concluded with a description of the rudiments that went into the implementation of the study. The issues of reliability and validity were also discussed as were participant confidentiality and the ethical aspects that had been taken into account in the study. These include maintaining the anonymity of the interview participants and also how the researcher had adhered to the research codes of ethics as provided by the research institution. The next chapter focuses on the presentation and interpretation of the research results and the data analysis of the information obtained from the interviews which were conducted.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION OF THE RESEARCH RESULTS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter focused on the research methodology used in the study. Accordingly, it discussed the research process, research design, population and sample, data collection method, data analysis as well as the issue of reliability and validity that was used for the study. This chapter deals with the presentation and interpretation of the research results. The goal of the study was to analyse the integrated marketing communication at the View Boutique Hotel in Johannesburg, South Africa. This, the chapter contains the presentation and interpretation of the data that was collected from the in-depth interviews that were conducted at the View Boutique Hotel. The sample size of 30 participants included the marketing manager, some marketing staff members and guests of the hotel. Thematic analysis was used to analyse and interpret the data and is discussed in the chapter as well.

This study used semi structured interviews which included a number of open-ended questions which were contained in the interview guide. The interviews were recorded, participant observation was used, and field notes were made during the interviews. In order to analyse the qualitative data, the researcher read and reread the field notes and the interview transcripts in order to identify recurring themes that emerged.

A discussion of the four IMC messages helped to deepen the understanding of the topic under investigation. The chapter concluded with a summary of the discussion on the planned, service, product and unplanned messages of the hotel. The research objectives of this study were discussed in accordance to how they impacted on each of the IMC message typology. In addition, recurring themes that emerged were highlighted. The next section discussed the demographic profile of the participants.

4.2 DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF PARTICIPANTS

This section of the study discusses the demographic profile of the participants. The interview guide focused on certain demographic variables of the participants such as gender, age, province of residence, occupation, educational level and job designation. According to Kotler and Keller (2009:342) the demographic profile of participants, which includes variables such as age, gender, education, occupation, income, ethnicity, nationality, race, and religion, is important as it is closely linked with participants wants and needs and may easily be measured. This study intended to portray the participants' perspectives on the planned, product, service and unplanned messages of the hotel in relation to their individual experiences from the data collected through the in-depth interviews. The next section depicts the demographic variable of gender in the form of pie charts, bar charts and tables.

4.2.1 Gender

The pie chart below indicates the number of the guests' which include male and female participants in percentages. The male participants are depicted in blue and the female participants in orange.

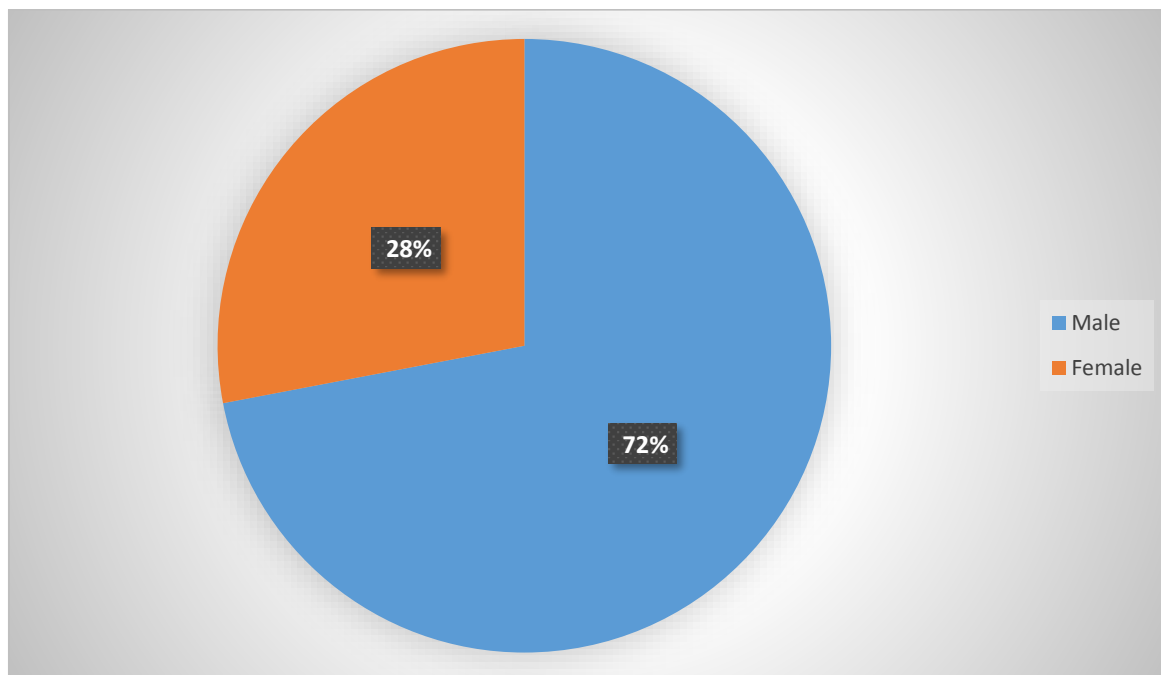


Figure 4.1: Gender

Source: Researcher's own compilation (2017)

The figure above indicated that the majority of the guests at the View Boutique Hotel were male at (72%), with 28% of the guests being female participants. This predominance of males has emerged from other studies carried out on hotels. Example of such research included the one done Šerić and Saura (2012) who conducted a study on luxury hotels in central and southern Dalmatia. Their study found that “among 101 guests, 68 guests stayed in luxury hotels, while 33 guests stayed in first class hotels while 51 of the respondents were male (50,5%), 50 were female (49,5%)” Šerić and Saura (2012:837–838). Similar outcome also emerged from a study carried out by Seric, Gil-Saura and Mikulic 2016) on hospitality marketing, with the study revealing that the number of male guests in the hotel was higher than that of female guests – a percentage of male guests of 50,5% and female guests of 49,5%. The next section focuses on the demographic variable of age.

4.2.2 Age

This pie chart below indicates the age of the participants in percentages using different colours to depict the various age groups.

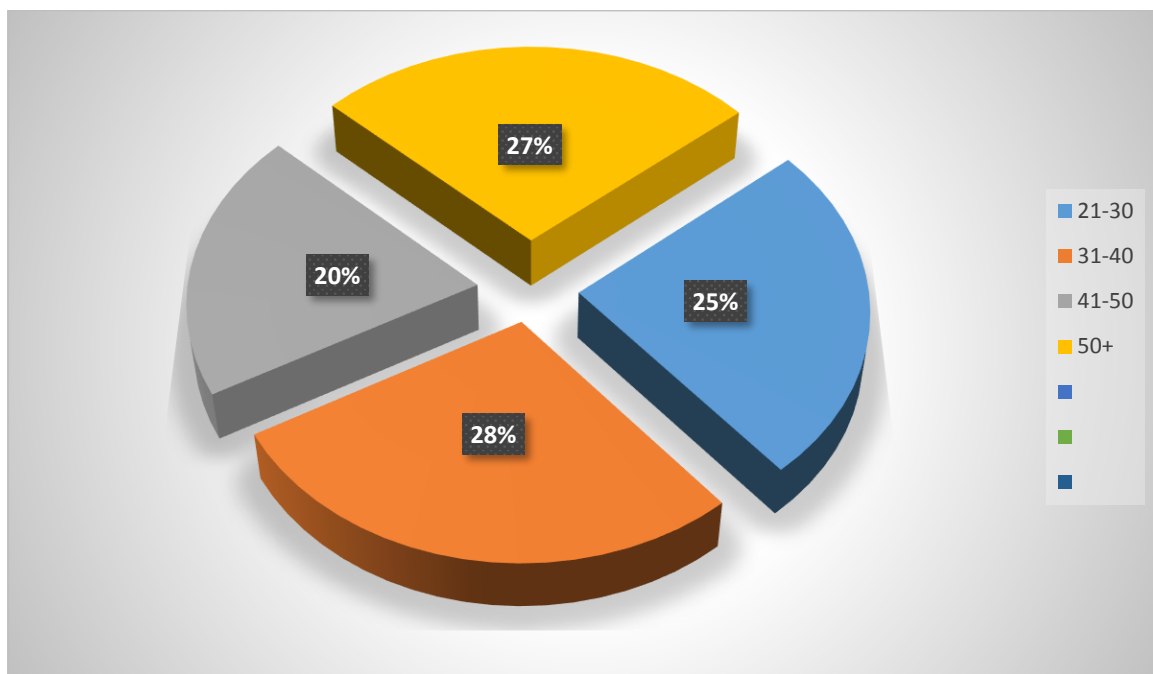


Figure 4.2: Age

Source: Researcher's own compilation (2017)

The two dominant age groups were 31 to 40 (28%) and 50+ (27%) followed by 30 to 41 at 25% and 41 to 51 at 20%.

4.2.3 Educational level

Below is a table indicating the educational level of the participants in percentages.

Table 4.1: Educational level of participants

Educational attainment	Number	Percentages
None	0	0
Diploma/degree	22	73
Postgraduate	5	17
Professional	3	10
Others (please specify)	0	0
Total	30	100

Source: Researcher's own compilation (2017)

In relation to the educational level attained, the majority of the guest participants had college degrees/diploma (73%), some of the participants had postgraduate degree (17%), while 10% of the participants were professionals. The next section discusses the participants' place of origin.

4.2.4 Place of origin

The chart below indicates the guest participants' places of origin in percentages.

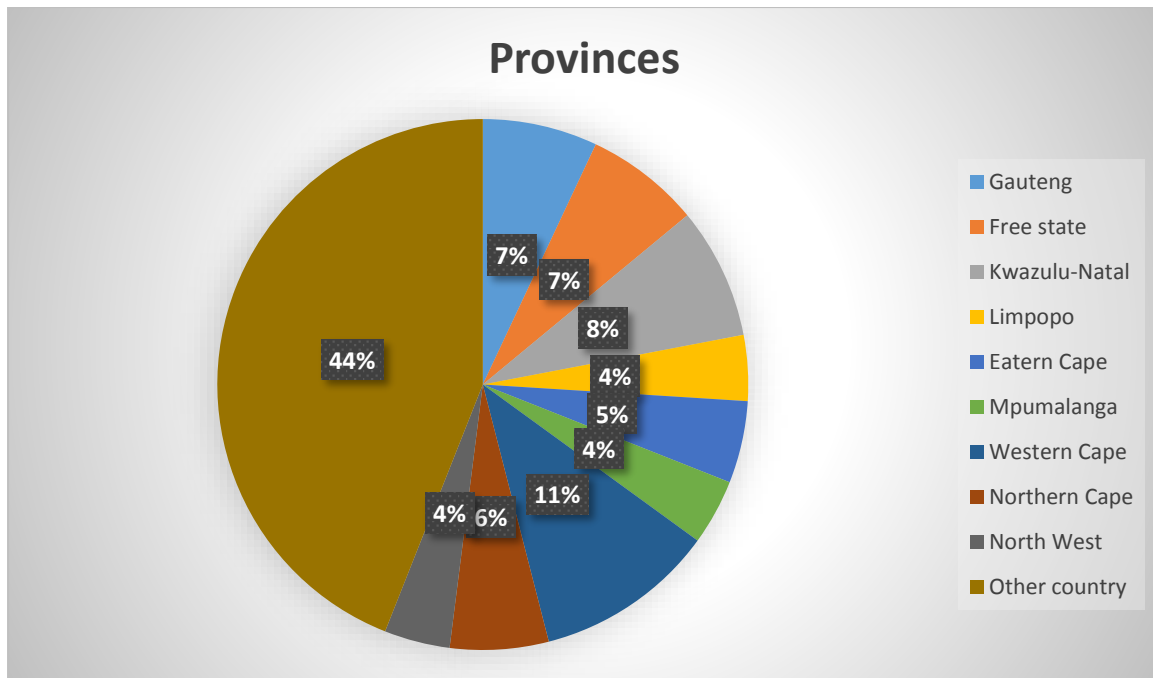


Figure 4.3: A chart depicting the location of participants

Source: Researcher's own compilation (2017)

Regarding the participants' province or place of origin, the responses indicated that the majority of the guests of the View Boutique Hotel were foreign nationals. The study found that 44% of the participants were from countries other than South Africa, 11% from the Western Cape Province 8% from Kwazulu-Natal, 6% from the Northern Cape Province, 5% from the Eastern Cape Province, 4% from the North West Province, 7% from both Gauteng and the Free State, 4% from Mpumalanga Province and 4% from Limpopo Province. It was, thus, clear that the majority of the participants in the study were from countries other than South Africa. During the interview, it emerged from the responses that the some of the participants were staying at the hotel for business reasons or because they were on holiday, and other reasons. The next section restates the research objectives and then discusses the four types of IMC messages, namely, planned messages, product messages, service messages and unplanned messages, of the View Boutique Hotel in relation to the perspectives of both the guests and the marketing staff.

4.3 THE FOUR TYPES OF MESSAGE

It emerged from the literature review how important it is for organisations to ensure consistency in all their messages as this will strengthen both their internal and external interactions. In the hotel context it is imperative that hotels are able to meet or maintain the standard that is expected of them by their diverse guests. This may be assisted through planned messages or marketing communication.

4.3.1 Planned messages

The research objective was to analyse the perceptions of the marketing staff and guests of the hotel's planned messages. As indicated previously in the literature review, planned messages refer to those messages that are disseminated to customers, in the case of hotels guests, through the traditional marketing mix communication tools which include advertising, personal selling, public relations, sales promotion and sponsorships (Duncan & Moriarty 1997:78; Gronroos 2007:305). Planned messages are used to inform and persuade customers to purchase an organisation's product offering. However, as these types of messages originate from within the organisation, they are not perceived as credible (Duncan & Moriarty 1997:78).

It was clear from the responses received during the in-depth interviews that the View Boutique hotel still has much to do in respect of how it promotes its market offerings. There was an indication of limited use of marketing communication tools. The hotel relied heavily on its websites, Facebook, recommendation or referrals from previous guests of the hotel or users of its facilities and its association with the online tour agencies to promote its market offering. The management of the hotel was not exploring other avenues such as the traditional marketing communication mix, which includes advertising, personal selling, public relations, sales promotion and sponsorships, that it could use to create a greater awareness of its product offerings. It was evident that the hotel was not combining all or some of the relevant marketing communication mix to create awareness of the hotel itself and the products and services that it has to offer. The study found that the hotel was outsourcing its marketing promotional activities to a company that ran these activities for it. It emerged from the responses obtained from the in-depth interviews conducted with the

marketing staff and some of guests of the View Boutique hotel. The participants all had similar views, in that the majority of them agreed that there was limited use of marketing communication tools in the hotel's marketing promotion with one participant stating that "there is limited use of promotional tools, I have noticed that the hotel does not make use of promotional tools like advertising, newspaper, television, radio and media relations to create awareness". Another participant indicated that "I learnt about this hotel from a friend of mine who has used the hotel before". The participant added that "you cannot get enough information from the hotel's website". Another participant mentioned that "even if you went on the hotel's websites, you will not get detailed information about the hotel". Most of the participants were of the view that the hotel's website was not as functional expected. This finding is in line with the opinion of Finne and Gronroos (2009:180) that an organisations' method of communication is basically from the sender perspective, that is, it adopts an inside-out approach.

In essence, hotels engage the use of the internet social media platform such as Facebook to promote their market offering (Leung & Tanford 2016:315–516). According to a member of staff participant "we have an agent that is contracted to handle the marketing promotion, most of the marketing is done on social media and online based". The participant added that "we use online tour agents and Facebook, that is where we do the bulk of our marketing, we don't do man-to-man marketing". The participant explained further that "we partner with online tour operators and travel agencies brilliantly, we have managed to double the number of people that use our rooms. From January 2017 to January 2018, the numbers have doubled". The participant further commented that the "challenges is to get the other facets done, that is, looking at the conferencing and even how to market more to the public". The participant added that "the main focus of the agent is more on the rooms than we do in other functions". One member of staff participant indicated that "we outsource most of our marketing activities to a Cape Town based company". However, the hotel is situated in Johannesburg. It is vital that hotels maintain close relationship with their guests to gain their trust and ensure customer loyalty. This view is consistent with the suggestion of Sangkaworn and Mujtaba (2015:2) that, if hotels they want their guests to repeat their visits, they should create what they described as "customer intimacy" as this make a hotel more attractive to its guests.

The comment of one of the participants that most of the marketing was done on social media and online was similar to the comments of two other participants. One of them stated “I learnt about the special rates and specials that the hotel has from their websites” while the other participant indicated that “sometimes one just comes across the product offering on the hotel’s website”. It is not possible to overemphasise the importance of social media in the hotel business. Some of the participants suggested that the hotel website is not as functional as it should be or is expected, since “one can hardly get current or updated information from the hotels’ website. But from the above comments from other participants, it is obvious that their opinions on the issue concerning the hotel’s website is different. From the disparities in the comments provided by the participants on acquiring information from the hotel’s website, it is evidenced that the participants visited the hotels’ websites at different times. The one participant visited the website when it was updated so was able to get the special rates that the hotel advertised. On the other hand, the other participant visited the hotel’s website when the special rates advertised had run its course and so the participant was not able to catch in on the hotel’s special. The View Boutique Hotel was using the internet, for example, its website and social media platforms, such as Facebook, to promote its marketing offering.

Although this marketing communication method is geared towards the right direction, it is not sufficient to promote the product offering of the hotel. Zivkovic et al (2015:26) conducted a study on the mountain hotels in Stara, Planina, Kopaonik and Zlatibor in 2015. The purpose of this study conducted on a sample of mountain hotels in Serbia was to determine guest perceptions of the hotel and guests’ satisfaction with the hotels. The outcome of the study indicated that social networks could be used successfully by service providers to improve business performance and increase revenue while enhancing the understanding of the needs of the guests/customers. There has been a significant transformation in how hotels operate since the advent of social media and online information. As a result of this, transparency in the social media has provided hoteliers with feedback and paved the way for new communication channels.

Nevertheless, the researcher was of the opinion that that the View Boutique Hotel should include the traditional marketing mix, for example, advertising, personal selling,

public relations, sales promotion and sponsorships, in its marketing promotional activities to achieve the desired result. According to Kotler and Armstrong (2004:77) marketing promotion may be used to describe the various activities designed by an organisation to disseminate the importance or advantages of its product to the target audience, thereby persuading them to purchase/make use of the product. To this end, marketing promotional activities, such as advertising, public relations, personal selling, and sponsorship, may be used by the organisation to persuade customers buy into its product offering. Regarding promotion in the hotel industry, advertising is very effective. However, it is the responsibility of the management of the hotel to strategies the marketing mix to select. A hotel may need to select various marketing mixes in that the marketing mix is only an instrument in achieving the set objectives of the hotel. A lot of planning and consideration is required to create the appropriate marketing mix and the hotel management must ensure that the mix chosen is sufficiently flexible so that it will suit subsequent alteration in the market (Cooper et al 2008:565).

According to Petzer et al (2008:7) hotels make use of some of the traditional marketing mix to maximise the potential of their business. For example, a hotel could create greater awareness of its products offering and attract more patrons by increasing its advertising, through being proactive in contacting customers, reposition its service offerings in the sense that it could offer complimentary and convenience services such as free meals included in the room rates or valet parking, and offer discounts or lower prices.

According to Leung and Tanford (2016:315) a poll was conducted recently by TravelClick on hotels and how they carry out their marketing activities found that social media can be efficiently used to get to the vast majority of customers. Accordingly, the number of hoteliers who have taken to social media in their marketing activities is increasing with hotels using social media as marketing or promotion tools. It was found that Facebook was used by 65% of hoteliers, thus making it the favourite social media channel. The users' involvement with a hotel's Facebook page may have an impact on the Facebook page, thereby influencing attitudes toward the hotel brand which in turn may influence hotel booking intentions (Leung & Tanford 2016:315–316).

In terms of how the hotel should promote its marketing offering, based on the comments received from the participants, it was clear that the View Boutique Hotel should establish a strong online present. In relation to what is obtainable in the hospitality industry and on social media. Hotels could attract new customers and retain current customers by a more prominent presence on the internet or social media platforms. At the time of the study, the View Boutique Hotel was making use of its website and Facebook page, although these were not being updated on a regular basis. The website was the platform that the hotel used to promote its market offering but it was not directly managed by the hotel as the hotel was outsourcing its marketing promotion activities to a marketing company to run on its behalf. The majority of the participants expressed similar views on how the hotel should promote its marketing offering and enhance its online present by extending it beyond Facebook and its website. This view was clear in one of the staff participant's assertions that "our Facebook page is managed by the marketing company that oversees the running of their marketing activities and, as such, is not regularly updated with the latest information from the hotel". Another participant also pointed out that "there is the need for the hotel to have a strong presence on not only the hotel's website or Facebook, but it should integrate social media like Twitter". Another participant lamented that "the hotel still does not have a strong online presence".

The importance of using the internet as a marketing platform for hotels must not be underplayed. This view and those of the participants are consistent with the opinion of Tse (2013:897–898) who pointed out the importance of hotels using the internet as a marketing platform, irrespective of their size and status. This medium of conducting business should be taken seriously as it harnesses the potential of a hotel to be able to reach a wider audience within a short space and is cost effective. In addition, the internet has the possibility to serve as a major distribution channel that may provide direct communication with the customers of the hotel. It was clear from the study findings that the hotel needed to make a greater commitment and invest in efforts to build more features at advanced levels. There is evidence that, although the internet has fundamentally transformed travel and hospitality distribution, marketing managers in the hospitality industry are still being confronted with the challenges of embracing the use of the internet as a marketing platform. This view is similar to that of Leung and Tanford (2016:315–316) that the unprecedented dissemination of social media

has transformed the manner that people communicate with others as well as the way in which businesses attract and retain customers. Social media is a social phenomenon with businesses that have adopted the use of social media channels to connect with their customers as part of interactive marketing reaping benefits of the effectiveness of social media marketing.

The View Boutique Hotel had clearly not embraced the notion of using the potential of the internet to its advantage. This was clear from the marketing manager's lethargic attitude to this notion. According to Tse (2013:898), there are boundaries and weakness in using of internet in marketing by hotels. A study conducted by Au and Akiz (2009) likened the internet hotel marketing of hotels in Northern Cyprus and Hong Kong. The study established that hotels in Northern Cyprus had little experience in using their websites as a marketing tool. Panagopoulos, Kanellopoulos, Karachanidis, and Konstantinidis 2011) investigated 30 chain hotel websites operating in Greece in order to suggest an evaluation technique to help hotel managers to assess their websites and mend any weakness so as to up their total performance. The study found that, in general, the participants demonstrated a poor performance in using social media. This outcome was similar to what was happening at the View Boutique Hotel. It is obvious that, while the use of the internet as a marketing platform in the hotel industry has grown phenomenally, there are still many challenges and issues (Tse 2013:897–898).

There are numerous advantages to maintaining a strong internet present. Zivkovic et al (2015:27–28) highlighted the benefits of a strong online presence. People maintain an internet presence for numerous reasons which include sharing their knowledge and experiences with other people. Online users often receive motivation from sharing information online especially when they feel that their experiences may be of help to others. In the hotel context, by describing their experiences with hotel services, their satisfaction and/or dissatisfaction, people communicate a perception of the service provider and how to improve every aspect of the services. Hoteliers may use the opportunity provided by the contemporary media to create a sustainable and enduring connection with the customer which should ultimately, lead to an increase in sales, repeat visits, retaining old customers and attracting prospective ones.

In terms of how the View Boutique Hotel ensured message consistency across all its marketing communication channels. There were dissimilar views expressed by the participants. It is evident from the comments of some of the participants that more work needed to be done in this regard. The staff members were clearly not very involved in the hotel's communication as it appeared that the manager was doing everything. In other words, there was a lack of internal communication within the hotel and the staff of the hotel were not engaged in any internal communication. A staff member participant indicated that "we are not communicated to frequently, we hardly have staff meeting and, so, most of the information about what is going on in the hotel is not within our knowledge." Another staff member participant commented that "we have had an incident whereby the staff communicates something to a guest, the manager or the next staff communicate something else to the same guest on the same issue". The participant added that "there is no uniformity there, we have to get the right information on time so that we can speak in one voice". A study conducted by Turkoz and Ayse (2008) on internal marketing and hotel performance revealed that, in organisation such as hotels, messages could be effectively communicated using internal marketing. Internal marketing refers to a deliberate effort that utilises a marketing-like approach to motivate, inform, inform and organise internal customers which, in the case of the study, refers to the employees of the hotel. Thus, internal marketing may be used for making the external customer or guests thus, ultimately, improving business performance.

It is imperative that every member of the organisation is aware of and acknowledges the relationship between what they do and the impact it may have on the customer. To this end, employees should be viewed as customers and treated as internal customers. Investing in efficient employees in an organisation, such as a hotel, is tantamount to investing in product quality (Turkoz & Ayse 2008:150). Arens (2006:50) purports that clients are, unarguably, the most important asset of the organisation and, hence, there is a need to continually plan activities or devise ways to establish a sustainable relationship with them. In addition, it is vital that organisations are consistent in the type of message they send out to their clients and, thus, the need for all their marketing communication to be integrated.

In respect of the participants' views on the level of consistency in the hotel's messages it was evident that from the responses received that the manager handled all forms of communication or information that was sent out by the hotel. The staff members were not permitted to be proactive or use their discretion in this regard. In other words, the hotel was operating like "a one-man show" where the staff were barely allowed to provide any input. A member of staff participant indicated that "On message consistency, I manage everything, everything while message that go out filter through me, what goes out comes to me first. I also discuss with other staff members to ensure there is uniformity". The participant asserted "that before emails are sent or any posting to social media everything goes through me". Another staff member participant stated that "there is room for improvement, everything has to be done by the manager". One staff member participant commented that "it is necessary to sit down with the staff to discuss the changes". The participants' comments are consistent with the recommendations of Clow and Baack (2004:14) that it is important for an organisation to extend the scope of its communication to include everyone who deals with the organisation and that this form of communication must be consistent with the organisation's message. This will play a significant role in establishing a lasting relationship between an organisation and its various internal and external stakeholders. This assertion is in line with the opinion of Finne and Grönroos (2009:180) that an organisation's method of communication is centred on the sender perspective that is in turn based on an inside-out view. This indicates that the organisation or sender initiates the communication and a consistent message is conveyed to the consumer. It is important that an organisation should be able to meet customer expectations through planned messages. An organisation can make a brand promise by conveying planned messages to its customers and prospective customers. According to Duncan and Moriarty (1997:78), planned messages may be defined as messages that are sent through the traditional elements of the marketing communication mix, namely, advertising, personal selling, public relations, sales promotion and sponsorships. In terms of message consistency, the majority of the guests were of the view that the messages they received from the hotel could not be said to be consistent. The messages were sometimes conflicting in what the hotel indicated on its websites was often not what the guests received when they visited the hotel. In addition, what a staff member sometimes communicated to the guests on arrival was different to what the next staff member communicated to the same guest

on the same issue, hence, no consistency. However, the majority of the guests expressed the view that the issue could be remedied by training the staff and frequent communication between management and staff. According to a guest participant “the hotel had a special that included a stay at the hotel with a complimentary spa treatment. On getting to the hotel, the staff member who attended to me was not aware of the promotion on the website”. Another guest participant stated that “there was this time I was supposed to receive a complimentary dinner that comes with the package I settled for. But that did not happen because the hotel did not prepare for it”. One participant expressed the opinion that “it is like the staff are not totally aware of everything going on around the hotel” while another participant suggested that “there should be communication between the manager and the staff so that the staff can be well informed about things that are available and what they should do”. According to one participant, “the staff should also be sent for training”.

This section contained a discussion on planned messages, the next section focuses on product messages and provide an explanation of all the items that were included in the interview guide under product messages.

4.3.2 Product messages

One of the research objectives was to analyse the perceptions of the marketing staff and guests about the hotel’s product messages. Product messages are messages that emanate from an organisation’s product offering. The participants were asked to comment on the hotel’s rooms. The findings indicated that the majority of the participants were satisfied with the hotel rooms. The hotel rooms were clearly well maintained with contemporary decor. However, a few participants were of the opinion that some items in the rooms should be changed or upgraded to fit in with modern decor. Generally, all the participants indicated that the hotel rooms were well maintained and that they were happy with the hotel’s product offering as regards the condition of the rooms. One participant stated that “the rooms are excellent” while another participant asserted that “the décor in the rooms is good and they are relaxing”. One participant maintained that “the hotel’s room is very good, I can’t complain” while another participant commented that “the rooms are okay”. Of the responses two of the participants only suggested that the rooms should be upgraded

with one of them stating that “the hotel’s room is perfect, only that, as a fashion designer, I think the curtains and beddings should be changed” while another participant suggested that “the hotel’s rooms should be upgraded”.

Based on the participants’ responses it may be argued that majority of the participants who were interviewed agreed that the hotel’s rooms were good. A facility such as the View Boutique Hotel, rooms are a very important aspect of a hotel. Lee and Shea (2015:542) are of the view that, in the hotel context, when a product is able to satisfy the customers’ needs and expectation, they will usually make a repeat visit with such a repeat visit enhancing the opportunity to establish a good relationship between the hotel and its customers. Hotel facilities, such as clean and spacious rooms, should satisfy the guests happy and may also influence their behaviour. It is also imperative to emphasise that rooms are the core products of a hotel and cannot be separated from the guests’ expectations when they make use of the hotel.

With regard to the participants’ views on the food, beverage, entertainment and recreation provided by the hotel, most of the participants agreed that the hotel should improve on certain issues regarding the beverages stock in the hotel. In addition, although the food was good, there was no entertainment. A few of the participants recommended that the hotel should introduce entertainment such as a live band and dance nights. The participants also suggested that the hotel should take the trouble to get to know the tastes and preferences of their guests as this would make the guests, especially those who visit the hotel frequently, feel special. One of the participants expressed the view that “the food is good, but the beverages are something that the hotel should look into” with another participant stating that “the hotel hardly stocks beverages and this has encouraged the guests to bring their own beverages when they have events or even to go out to purchase beverages”. This assertion was endorsed by another participant who explained that “the other time we had a wedding ceremony here, we had to make arrangement or our own drinks”. The participants’ recommendations were consistent with the view of Cooper et al. (2008:565-569), who asserted that the primary motive behind marketing devise means to give the customers ultimate satisfaction. Organisations should find new or better ways to ensure that their products and services are used. It is vital that hotels recognise that the tastes, likings, needs, lifestyles, family size and composition of guests differ, and

they follow “a policy which increases market demand for their products”. Consistent with the views of some of the participants, food and beverages in the form of excellent dining may have a positive impact on the guests of the hotel. A study conducted by Gundersen et al. (1996) on business travellers revealed that food and beverages are an important aspect of a hotel’s product offering (Lee & Shea 2015:542).

It has found that certain factors, such as music, may influence the rate of customer spending behaviour, namely, the pace at which the customer shop, amount of money they are willing to spend, and amount of time they have to stay in a store. Specific to this study, which was conducted in the hospitality context, it has been found that music in a hotel may offer guests more affective experiences that tops brand personality (Suh, Moon, & Han 2015:730). However, the View Boutique Hotel did not have the opportunity to freely play music at functions being held in the hotel’s premises without incurring the negative attention of the residents. This is issue of inadequate entertainment like being able to play music may also impact adversely on a hotel as some guests may not choose to make a repeat visit to a hotel where the entertainment offered, such as music, is restricted with this, ultimately, leading to a decline in the number of customers patronising the hotel. Narteh el al. (2013:408) maintain that it has been established that “it is easier and five times cheaper to keep an existing customer than to recruit a new one”. Obviously, the marketing challenge confronting numerous service businesses lies in devising ways in which to retain their current customers and to make their offerings more physical to potential customers. The methods that could be used to achieve this include designing recreational facilities and having trained personnel to serve as a symbol of service quality, creating a tangible representation of the service offered and linking the marketing of services to the marketing of goods. A service may be viewed as an experience which is perishable, and which cannot be inventoried for future use.

Regarding the rates/prices versus the value proposition of the hotel, almost all the participants interviewed agreed that the price/rate was good. Some of the participants were of the view that, since the hotel was a boutique hotel with a five star rating, the price/rate was very good for such a facility. Very few of the participants only were of the view that the price/rate was somewhat high. One member of staff participant stated that “we have no complaints, our prices are fair, considering we are rated 5-stars we

are fair compared to other boutique hotels with a 5-star hotels". According to a guest participant "the rates are good, you get good value for the money you pay" while one participant commented on the price/rates of the hotel, saying "that one is good, while another participant stated that "it is good, look at the hotel, the price is good, I can't complain". However, four participants disagree with the others with one stating that "the hotel is not your regular kind of hotel, look at the structure and where it is built, the rate should not be this much". Another participant was of the view that "that the price is not really affordable, not everyone can afford it" while one participant commented that "the hotel is hidden and makes it difficult for anyone who is not conversant with the area to locate it, so I will say the price is high". Another participant expressed the view that "the price is quite on the high side". Thus, the study found that most of the participants agreed that the price/rate charged by the hotel was good, while a few disagreed. Price is linked to quality and there is a general perception on the part of customers that a highly priced service means that the quality is good. Customers tend to use price as an instrument with which to measure quality with customers using price as an instrument to evaluate service quality. Thus, if customers think that the price they paid is more on the high side, this could lead to dissatisfaction in that, they tend to think that they did not get value for the amount they paid. Customers who are not satisfied are more likely to complain when the price is high although, on the other hand, customers are less likely to complain about low price if they are involved in low quality (Kim, Lee & Mattila 2014:890).

In respect of the way in which a hotel influences the product messages to ensure message consistency it is worth noting that product messages may be influenced by improving the hotel's product offering. In the case of the View Boutique Hotel one participant stated that "facilities such as the conferencing facilities, the rooms, lounges" should be improved while another participant commented that "facilities for the disabled, bar stock and the conferencing could be improved or upgraded". It is essential that a hotel pay attention to those factors that pose and address them to get them up to standard. Marketing is also an issue. It was clear from the study findings that an appropriate marketing technique, designed specifically for the View Boutique Hotel, should be put in place. There were obviously not enough rooms designed specifically for the disabled. In fact, at the time the interviews were conducted, there was one room only that catered to the disabled. Clearly, the hotel should address this

issue and design more rooms to accommodate the disabled. Concerning the beverages provided it emerged from the responses received from the majority of the participants that the hotel did not stock up sufficiently on beverages. This is a core aspect of a hotel that should not be neglected to ensure that the guests of the hotel do not have to go elsewhere in search of beverages while they are using the hotel's facility. For there to be consistency in the messages, an organisation should influence the product messages. Product messages are a function of the attributes of a product, for example, form, pricing, performance, durability, reliability, distribution networks, features, conformance with the general requirement, quality, reparability and style. A product is the initial piece of a marketing mix and it should, therefore, should form the foundation of communication decisions (Van der Walt, Strydom, Marx & Joost 1996:172).

Product messages was discussed in the section above. The next section will address service messages.

4.3.3 Service messages

The research objective was to analyse the perceptions of marketing staff and guests of the hotel's service messages. According to Sangkaworn and Mujtaba (2015:2–3), service messages may be described as intangible and experiential and also viewed as an essential act or performance that an individual or group may offer to another. Intangibility does not result in the ownership of anything. Service quality is of paramount importance for all service providers. A survey on hotels conducted by Sangkaworn and Mujtaba (2015) study revealed that the majority of all the customers who took part in the survey listed poor service as the primary reason for switching to other brand, with price following closely as a further reason for switching. It is at this point that relationship marketing should take centre stage as it also plays a role in retain customer loyalty to an organisation – see recommendations by Jung et al (2013:395).

To maximise communication effect, the onus is on the organisation to ensure that the service messages did align with customer. According to Duncan and Moriarty (1997:84), service messages “originate from interactions with the organisation's

employees". Clearly, in the hotel context, for the expectations of customers to be met, it is essential that the hotel's employees are competent, reliable and responsive in that the quality of a service is determined by the capability of the employees. In the case of the View Boutique Hotel, the services provided at the hotel was generally good as were the prices/rates. It could, thus, be concluded most of the customers would make repeat visits to the hotel. This conclusion is based on the responses received from the participants. However, the challenge facing the hotel was its marketing relationship.

Commenting on the service messages of the hotel, which referred to the competence of the hotel staff members, the majority of participants generally agreed that their service quality was good and that they were quick to respond to the needs of the guests. However, a few of the participants recommended that some of the staff should be sent for training. One participant stated that the staff of the hotel "respond to my need as quickly as possible while another participant maintained that "the staff are helpful, and they pay attention". One participant indicated that "the staff members are competent". However, according to one of the member of staff participants "but the kitchen staff are the problem, there is not enough staff there". The participant added that "for us, being in the centre of marketing, it is given that we know how to handle guests. However, I feel that more should be done. It is the front people who talk mainly to guests. The emphasis is too much on them. Other staff like the chef, housekeeping, should be included". Another participant expresses the need for staff training, saying "there is a need for staff training, sometimes guests request to see the chef to pay him/her compliment for the good food, but they shy away because of a lack of training". A staff member participant asserted "that "when it comes to marketing staff, it is a rule, but others should be trained", another staff member participant indicated that "all the management of the hotel should provide an all-inclusive training for the staff at all level" while yet another staff member participant expressed the view that "we need training". Still on the issue of training, one staff member participant stated that "we don't provide training for the staff because the hotel does not have the resources for that at the moment".

The finding is consistent with the findings of a study on hotel service quality conducted by Chen and Chen (2014:79). Their study revealed that, in the hotel and restaurant industry, service is the main target with quality service having a significant effect on

the accommodation preference of guests. Furthermore, service quality may affect tourism awareness and behaviour intention. It is for this reason that so many hotels make every effort to improve their service quality. Service quality is the outcome of earlier expectations and actual perceptions of customers. While the majority of the participants appeared to be satisfied with the service quality, two of the guest participants did insist that the staff should receive some training on how to deal with guests. According to Abubakar and Mavondo (2013:843), “factors like nonverbal communication, physical attractiveness, dressing, facial expression, and tone of voice may make a lasting impression on customers” as do employees who are willing to offer guests helpful suggestions. In their study, Abubakar and Mavondo (2013) revealed that, of the 10 key characteristics of successful service firms, three are related to employees. These three include ensuring that the organisation fulfils its service promise to customers, employees are empowered to assist customers and being proactive in ways that go beyond the call of duty and having absolute trust in what the organisation stands for.

The participants were asked to comment on the human relations skills of the staff at the hotel. Service messages emanate from the experience of dealing with an organisation, its employee, agents and products. This includes the behaviour of the members of staff of the organisation, the services provided, whether the system and technology used are in line with the organisation’s objectives and whether the organisation sends out appropriate message about itself. It emerged from the responses given in the in-depth interviews that it would appear that the hotel staff members were not totally committed to their jobs at the hotel because they lacked motivation from management to expend more effort to ensure that the hotel operated smoothly. In general, the participants agreed that more needed to be done in order to improve the human relation skills of the staff. Although many of the guest participants suggested that the hotel staff would benefit from training, they also stated that, overall, they were good, and, if motivated, could do even better. According to one staff member participant “we have a lethargic attitude to work because we are not motivated, we lack incentives” while another staff participant expressed the opinion that the “management should also consider providing more training for us as staff at all levels”. One guest participant hinted that the staff also lacked motivation to be proactive because, according to this participant, “there are a whole lot of things, like ideas that

we would like to put forward so as to improve on the business of the hotel". The participant continued by saying that "but, after thinking it through, we consider it a waste of time and energy because the management does not acknowledge our effort". The above statement is consistent with the recommendation of Ottenbacher, Shaw and Lockwood (2005:122) in the study they conducted in 2005. Their findings revealed that successful hospitality service depends on numerous key factors, including the fact that, (specific to this study), success in hotel services occurs when managers allow employees to be proactive and to use their discretion and own judgment in solving problems. In other words, the employees should be empowered and given the autonomy to exercise some form of control over job-related situations and decisions with management delegating responsibilities, providing opportunities for personal initiative and trusting the employees. In the service industry, such as the hotel industry, it is not only sensible to empower the employees but almost unavoidable in that the employees require flexibility if they are to fit their behaviour to the demands of each service they are required to offer, ultimately, resulting in customer needs being met more effectively. In the case of the View Boutique Hotel, the employees were clearly not being given the power to act according to their discretion as they had to follow the orders from the manager. One staff participant stated that "everything must go through the manager, we are not allowed to do things without seeking permission from the manager first". This assertion was confirmed by the manager that participated in the study that "everything that goes out filters through me". In the words of one staff participant "Initially, we tried to attain a certain level for the hotel, we have tried to push ourselves to ensure that business is up and running and that the guests are happy. But we are doing all these for below the job-related salary". According to one of the participants, "the attitude of the staff of the hotel towards the guests is very important". This is in line with the recommendation of Middleton et al (2009:106) that "Knowing the behavioural variable may be helpful to the hotel in planning their services to enhance the experience customers get from lodging with them". This is possible if there is good relationship established between the guests and the hotel. According to Ottenbacher et al (2005:123), new businesses can become a success by taking ownership and having personal engagement with the relevant people. It is, thus, clear that employees need to understand and be dedicated to the service that they are providing to ensure their complete commitment to it and, hence, the desired attitude.

Narteh et al (2013:411) highlighted that research has shown that, when a service provider, in this case a hotel such as the View Boutique Hotel, enters into a long-term relationships with its profitable customers, their spending behaviour will increase over time as a result of their coming to know and understand the organisation and their satisfaction with the quality of the services they receive. There is a tendency on the part of satisfied customers to bring in more businesses to the organisation in question. This describes the practice and positivity of relationship marketing. Every member of the hotel staff has an important role to play – the front desk staff, the cleaner, the chef, the driver – all contribute to the effective running of the hotel. As indicated by Lee and Shea (2015:543) in their discussion on the importance of service delivery, customers are happy when service employees are nice and friendly to them, give them special attention, provide them with extra information to them and satisfy their needs.

According to Sangkaworn and Mujtaba (2015:5), in relation to service messages, the hotel should take into account the speed of the check-In and check-out services. Promotion entails various activities that are put in place by an organisation to ensure that the organisation creates awareness of its products and service offering to its customers and also attracts prospective customers while ensuring that current customers make repeat visits. Regarding the hotel's service messages, one participant stated that "we do not provide any form of training except for the training that was arranged for the front house people by the concierge counsel". The participant added that "this concierge training was also an incentive to the front house people and they were shown around the environment". The participant also indicated "that only people who have had previous experience in the industry are hire to work at the View Hotel. Once a staff is hired, they are placed on a three months' probation period, if their performance is acceptable, they will be employed formally to continue working". One participant indicated that "the staff are friendly and hands-on, but you can see that they are not forthcoming, there is something reserved about them". Another participant's comment was that "management should get more in touch with the staff, then they can take it from there". Another participant was of the view that "the staff should be trained more and be encouraged to be outspoken" while yet another participant commented that "they should train the workers and give them more information about what is going on here". It emerged from the responses that almost

all of the participants were of similar views that the staff members at the View Boutique Hotel should be trained to enable them to execute their job function efficiently.

In relation to the booking system used by the hotel, based on the responses from the interviews, it was evident that the majority of the participants were in agreement that the hotel booking system was flawless. There were numerous ways in which booking could be done at the View Boutique Hotel with guests having the option of booking online or booking directly. Booking online was cheaper than direct booking. It was clear from the participants' responses that they had nothing about which to complain in respect of the hotel's booking system. According to one participant, the hotel "is listed on Booking.com and Expedia as well". One participant indicated that "the booking system is what every other hotel uses, we also use the Semper booking system". "Generally, when it comes to reservations, it is more or less an international booking system, it is more effective". Another participant stated that "when people book online, the hotel offer guests cheaper options for rooms than when they book direct. We also outsource to an outside marketing company that handles the marketing. They promote the hotels in terms of the expos they attend from time to time. For instance, events like wedding, this marketing company provides the hotel with exposure and we get a lot of booking for weddings.

People make enquiries about the hotel online and, from there, we get a lot of bookings". As already mentioned, direct booking was more expensive than online booking. One participant indicated that "I have never had any issues with the hotel booking system ever since I started using this hotel", another participant stated that "I cannot complain because the booking system is good" while yet another participant commented that "we have various booking options to choice from, you either book online and get cheaper rates or book directly with the hotel". This participant's statement was in line with the view expressed by Almeida et al (2012:237) that, in the booking decision process, a guest or tourist has the freedom to make a choice on how to do a reservation. The tourist may choose to contact the hotel directly or through other means such as the travel agency. Service messages from a hotel may, for example, be evident through a flawless reservations system developed for the hotel (Petzer et al 2008:4). This in turn is a way in which the hotel may create and establish

meaningful relationships with its customers and achieve a competitive advantage (Lal et al 2005:261).

The booking system was made simple so as to increase the number of people making use of the hotel's services the participant added that "because of the inadequate online present, the hotel is listed on different online booking sites, the information on the site does not make it easy for people to book". This participant's comment is consistent with the view of Eagles, Hemessen and Legault (2013:834) that, in relation to tourism, "information expectation, and competition are all factors connected to the booking behaviour of travellers". Based on the amount of information available on the hotel's site, visitors are then able to make their own decisions concerning purchasing. The hotel industry is highly competitive, and it would appear that the majority of hotel managers are not coping with the challenges in the industry. In addition, there are the issues associated with establishing and maintaining a positive relationship with the customers (Cobos, Wang & Okumus 2009:441).

The participants were requested to comment on the payment system at the hotel. The study found that generally all the participants agreed that the payment system at the View Boutique Hotel was excellent. Guests have the option to pay with cash, credit or debit cards or a transfer. The guests described the payment system as an easy payment method. One participant stated that "we accept cash, credit card and debit order transfer", another participant commented that "the payment system includes cash, transfer and credit card and it is working well for the hotel", a participant mentioned that "the payment system, you can pay with your credit card, I always make payment with my credit card", one indicated that "the hotel accepts cash payments so I made a cash payment", one participant said that "the hotel accepts cash, but you can also make payment with your credit card", one participant commented that "I have never experienced any problem with payment ever since I have been using this hotel", one participant stated that "the hotels accept cash, but you can also make payment with your credit card" while one participant indicated that "there are various options to select from, you can pay cash, make payment with a debit or credit card". In terms of the payment system in hotels, generally, the payment system in use at the View Boutique Hotel was not complicated with the majority of the participants attesting to their similar responses during the interviews.

The participants were requested to comment on the quality of the services of the travel agencies. The majority of the responses received indicated that the services provided by the travel agencies could be described as good. According to a participant, online travel agencies (OTAs) “do so much, they bring a whole lot of business to us”. Another participant stated that “the travel agents, especially Acconda and Expedia, bring guests to us” while yet another participant indicated that “the travel agencies showcase the product and service of the hotel”. However, another participant commented that “there is not so much consistency with the travel agencies” although one participant stated that “The online tour operators focus mainly on accommodation, brilliantly, we have managed to double the number of people who use our rooms”. Another participant comment that “the main focus of the travel agent is more on the rooms than other facilities in the hotel. This statement is consistent with the views of Tse (2013:902) in a study conducted on online tour agency. According to Tse (2013), online tour agents are the prime channel for generating hotel room business for hotels. The similarity between the hotel which participated in this study and those in Tse’s (2013) study was that they both worked with almost the same online tour agents such as Expedia.com, and Booking.com out of the numerous online tour agencies, with the studies finding that the use of online tour agents brought business to the hotels in terms increasing the number of people who used the rooms.

When asked to comment on the location of the hotel the reactions and responses of the participants were mixed. However, there was a general concern about the unconventional location of the hotel. However, the location did not stop the participants from using the hotel because, for most of the participants, the hotel is good. The majority of the participant indicated the fact that the hotel was located in a residential neighbourhood was not to the advantage of the hotel. Some of the participants also pointed out that the signage of the hotel needed to be upgraded A participant indicated that “The hotel is on a regular street, next to people’s houses” while another participant remarked that “the hotel has limited facilities and space and, as a result of these factors, holding events on the premises can be restrictive due to the location of the hotel”. However, the majority of the participants expressed the view that the hotel’s physical environment was welcoming. One participant mentioned that “the hotel is located in a regular neighbourhood that also houses other private residents and, as such, when there is an event going on, music may not be played loudly, and the event

has to come to an end at around a certain time so as not to cause a disturbance for the neighbours". Another participant expressed a similar view, stating that "not being able to do certain things like playing music or partying into the night does not work well for the hotel's business". The majority of the participants were of the view that the hotel was not centrally located and that the signage was not visible enough with one participant stating that "most of the guests have complained about the hotel's signage".

Another participant also commented that "it is not easy to locate the hotel; the signage should be made more conspicuous from the main road leading to the hotel". The comment of one of the participant that "the hotel is located in a private residential neighbourhood" was in line with the view of Kulcsár (2006:81) that, in recent times, the number of hotels located in unusual, unique, interesting environments is on the increase" This trend may be explained by the fact that the attitude of hotel customers is evolving with this highlighting the need for the ongoing analysis of consumer behaviour to enable management to track the progress their organisations are making, either directly or indirectly, in the competitive hotel industry.

The participants were asked to comment on the hotel buildings, that is, the physical environment of the hotel. The findings revealed that, despite the fact that the View Boutique Hotel is housed in an ancient building that dates to the early days of Johannesburg's development, more than 100 years ago, it is homely and welcoming. It is evidenced from the participants' responses that the guests and staff were happy with the hotel's physical environment and that the View Boutique Hotel provided an enjoyable environment in which the guests could enjoy quality time and value for their money. In addition, the building had lost some of originality due to the renovations and alterations it had undergone in the past years although parts of the original buildings had survived the restoration. According to some of the participants, one could not help but admire the ambience of the building as it was still in good condition, the view from one of the lounges was simply beautiful and it would be easy to stay there forever.

The parking facilities are safe although there is not enough space for a large number of vehicles. However, the participants assumed the parking facilities had been built to suit the size of the building. The environment or "yard", as it was referred to by one of the participants, is well taken care of, and it is and safe. Most of the participants agreed

that they were happy with the clean, well-kept environment and the safe parking facilities. The only drawback in relation to the building and physical environment of the hotel was that it did not have adequate facilities for the disabled. According to one participant, “there are not enough facilities to cater for the disabled at the hotel, for example, there is only one room designed for the disabled”, another participant indicated that “even the toilet for the disabled is not functional” while yet another participant commented that “there are no stairways for the disabled to use. If a disabled person comes to the hotel, they have to fold their wheelchairs and be assisted by their friends or relatives or even the staff of the hotel in order to be able to move around. I think the hotel should do something about this”.

The study conducted by Suh, Moon, and Han (2015:728–729) on hotels found that a hotel’s physical environment forms a certain type of image about the hotel with a favourable physical environment. Having a positive impact on the guests will ultimately lead to the customers evaluating the service quality positively. Furthermore, research has shown that physical environment dimensions play an important part in creating the total image of the organisation, thus influencing customer perceptions. Thus, these factors enhance customer loyalty, thereby prompting customers to revisit the facility and also recommend it to others.

It emerged from the participants’ comments during the in-depth interviews on the way in which the hotel influenced its service messages to ensure message consistency. That the hotel staff required training in this regard to ensure uniformity in the service messages the hotel sent out. This highlighted the need for effective communication and internal marketing across all levels of staff. A previous study on internal marketing and hotel performance conducted by Turkoz and Ayse (2008) revealed that, in organisations such as hotels, service messages may be effective using internal marketing. Internal marketing refers to a planned effort that utilises a marketing-like approach to motivate, inform, educate and coordinate internal customers which, in this case, refer to the employees of the hotel. In addition, internal marketing may be directed at creating satisfaction for the external customers or guests, thus, ultimately, enhancing business performance.

It is imperative that every member of the organisation is aware of and acknowledges the relationship between what they do and the impact it may have on the customer. To this end, employees may be viewed as customers and treated as internal customers as investing in efficient employees within an organisation, such as a hotel, is tantamount to investing in product quality (Turkoz & Ayse 2008:150). Furthermore, employees should be engaged in the running of the business. Karatepe (2014:680) suggests that, if employees are engaged in the operation of the business, they perform significantly better as compared to when they are not engaged. Engaged employees tend to experience positive emotions and they tend to rely on their personal resources to perform their work function. In addition, engaged employees also work with devotion.

In terms of how the hotel should influence its service messages to ensure message consistency the recommendation provided were based on the views of the majority of the participants. One participant was of the view that “service message can also be influenced to ensure consistency if the hotel can motivate the staff. I think it has to go back to staff motivation. If we are motivated one way or the other, if we are happy, we will portray a better image of the hotel. Salary is below market related level. It is frustrating”. The participant continued by saying that “We have more work to do while we don’t get a fair salary. So, there is the tendency to do only the basics even when you know that you can do more. In relation to the marketing aspect, you can bring in a lot of business, but you don’t push guests to book, and you don’t sell much because you don’t have the motivation”. Another participant stated that “we lack motivation”. However, one participant expressed a different view, saying”. “We have staff who are friendly and care about the guests, they are willing to go the extra mile to please the guests”. The participant added that “training helps a lot and has its merits, we try here, we are a small establishment, and we don’t have funds to do training most of the time, like the other bigger hotels. I often talk with the departments to address issues as they emerge. We discuss when it is necessary”. Another participant was of the opinion that “the staff needs training”.

According to Seric and Gil-Saura (2012:830) service quality in the hotel industry needs to be improved if the needs of guests are to be met. Referring to the findings from a study conducted on the service quality aspects in small, medium and large hotels in

Scotland and other cities across the world. It may be argued that this trend in service quality is prevalent throughout the world as, even locally, there is always an issue about the quality of service provided by hotels irrespective of size or location. It is also important that attention be given to tangible elements of hotel service such as employee's attitude towards the guests. This section discussed service messages in the View Boutique Hotel context. The next section focuses on unplanned messages.

4.3.4 *Unplanned messages*

Unplanned messages refer to messages that are sent out through informal means such as news stories, research findings, grapevine, gossip, rumours, and word of mouth, and which cannot be controlled by the organisation (Angelopulo & Barker 2013:45). According to Arens (2006:246), unplanned messages are perceived to be believable due to the sources of these messages are regarded as credible. McLean (1997:140) states that positive messages from intermediary sources, such as family and friends, help to project a progressive image for an organisation whereas negative messages may damage its reputation. Unplanned messages may also emanate from stakeholders such as guests, through intermediary sources such as news stories, but if they do not emanate from the organisation, they are difficult to control. In fact, all an organisation may be able to do is influence them. External sources of unplanned messages include word of mouth, social media and traditional media which are considered to be credible and unbiased. The positive messages from intermediary sources such as the type mentioned above may enhance the image of the organisation while, on the other hand, negative messages may damage its image (Duncan & Moriarty 1997:88). This view is similar to that of Nandan (2005:269) who asserted that consumers are prone to act on the recommendations of previous users of products or services with this type of information dissemination or communication usually stemming from word of mouth or on the social media platforms. Having explained unplanned messages, the questions in the interview guide on planned messages are now discussed to give the readers will a clearer understanding of the topic under investigation.

The participants were requested to comment on the media coverage of the hotel. It was evident from the participants' responses about the media coverage of the hotel

as sources of unplanned messages. The majority of the participants felt that the media coverage of the hotel was inadequate. Most of them also agreed that the majority of guests or users of the hotel or the hotel's facilities, for example, as a venue for events, relied on word of mouth or referrals. The hotels' website was not updated regularly and, thus, it was not possible to access current information about the hotel. Most of the hotel patrons appeared to know about the hotel as a result of referrals by friends or relatives, while a few others had learnt about it by coming across the hotel's website or on Facebook. Nevertheless, there was clearly not enough information about the hotel on the website. According to one participant "the hotel does not have enough media coverage". Another participant associated the lack of media coverage of the hotel as the main reason why people were not able to locate the hotel easily – "we don't have enough media coverage". The participant added that "when we went for the concierge conference, you would find that other hotels in Johannesburg or Pretoria were easily accessible to people. For example, people can easily find Intercontinental Hotel in Sandton, but the View hotel does not have that". Another participant was of the view that "you don't read about the hotel in newspapers or see the hotel's advertisement, you only see the hotel on the hotel's website" while another participant commented that "even if you go on the hotel's website you will not get information about the hotel". Yet another participant stated that "I got to know of the hotel from a friend of mine, not from any social media". In relation to the staff playing a role in this, one participant stated that the "staff hardly do referrals because they are not motivated by management to carry out such a task".

According Wang, Yu and Fesenmaier (2002:415), social networks are used in order to establish strategies that account for the diverse needs and opportunities of the users, there are four primary interaction modes in using the social network and they include informational, relational, recreational, and transformational. These modes enable the marketer to establish which social networks have the highest potential for positive consumer response. "Social networks, defined previously in many other forms (virtual community, virtual network, online tourism community) have become incredibly significant in tourism, as consumers lean towards trusting other users and their recommendations as opposed to marketing messages". A hotel's presence on the network should be active, entailing two-way communications which are not necessarily focused purely on the hotel itself, but also on other adjoining topics, maintaining that

providing consumers with appropriate information will eventually result in gaining their business Jung et al (2013:395).

In relation to the participants' views of friends and relatives on the hotel, their responses were mixed, some positive and some negative with the participants responded from different perspectives depending on their individual relationship with and experiences of the hotel. More than half of the participants responded that they liked the hotel and that they always had something positive to tell their friends and relatives about the hotel. According to one participant, "when I took a photograph of the hotel from one of the lounges overlooking the area, I sent it to my mum and she loved it at once. My mum said that, the next time she visits Johannesburg, she would definitely stay here". Another participant indicated that "for a long time, I have been staying at the hotel ever since I was introduced to it by my brother. Then I told my cousin about the hotel and the services it provides, the view and the location of the hotel, and my cousin pressed me to take him along when next I visited and, eventually, I brought him here and he has not stopped talking about his pleasurable stay at the hotel". On the other hand, some of the participants shared that they had had negative experience staying at the hotel. According to one participant, "with what I experienced here, I don't think I will stay here again. I was told one arrival that my package included a complimentary spa treatment, only for me to get here and I almost did not get it because the staff who attended to me had not been informed about the package. The issue was only resolved after a long argument and the manager stepped in. I told my mum about it and she was not pleased about it." However, another participant stated that "my husband cannot stop singing the hotel's praises. We had a little private time here and he just got hooked, who wouldn't be?" According to one participant, "I my husband likes the place but, without a supply of alcoholic beverages, he is sceptical about visiting again". It was, thus, clear that the participants had different views with some of their friends or relatives liking the hotel because of its location while one participant liked the hotel but was not keen on revisiting it because of the lack of alcoholic beverages. On the other hand, another participant stated that "my friends could not stop talking about how good the hotel is when we had a small get together here" with one participant commenting that "I even have pictures of part of the hotel taken which I sent to my family and they love it".

In terms of how the hotel resolved complaints, the majority of the participants in the study indicated that generally the hotel paid attention to guest complaints and resolved them in a satisfactory way. It emerged that the View Boutique Hotel had put measures in place to attend to guest complaints and that, according to the guest participants, these measures were entirely satisfactory. For example, there was a guest complaints questionnaire and a suggestion box. One participant stated that “there is nothing much to say, I think the way they handle complaints is okay”, another participant was of the view that “if you have any problems with the staff or the service rendered to you, you can speak to someone like the manager and they look into it, so I will give them a pass mark’ while another participant commented that “I have not had any reason to complain so I don’t know”. On the other hand, the staff participants were not satisfied with the way in which complaints were handled in the hotel with one of them stating that “I do not understand how the management handle complaints, one minute you hear about something and you are waiting for it to be discussed and, the next minute, it has been resolved even without it being mentioned”. Another participant responded by saying that “issues like complaints just disappear, you don’t hear about them again”. On the other hand, the majority of the participants were of the opinion that the hotel handled and resolved complaints effectively. According to Lee and Shea (2015:543), when a hotel staff member pays attention to guest complaint and resolve the issue speedily, guests feel more at ease.

In relation to the messages about the View Boutique Hotel from social media, there was a disparity in the views of the participants about these messages. In their responses the participants indicated that the hotel should make a concerted effort to establish a strong online presence in the social media. It was also pointed out that there was not sufficient information about the hotel on its website. On the other hand, one participant stated, “that people who have in one way or another engaged the services of the hotel are pleased according to their experiences they share on Facebook”. One participant commented that the hotel is a place where you would want to spend time if you really want to be alone in a beautiful place. Someone posted a picture of the hotel on social media.” The main drawback for the hotel in respect of social media was that the information on its website was not current. According to a participant, “they need to do a lot of work on this aspect, you can hardly read about the hotel in the internet”. Another participant was of the view that “the hotel does not

have a strong internet presence and you only read about the hotel on the hotel's websites or if a previous guest of the hotel, writes about it and posts it on social media". According to another participant, "Not much, but I noticed that some of the comments are by a certain type of people who wants to relax a conservative but homely place, that is judging by their display pictures".

According to Nizamuddin (2015:17), organisation such as hotels are employing the use of communication platforms such as social media and user generated content (UGC) as valuable information resources. Hotels do not have any control over social media users or the type of information and experiences they upload on their social media sites, but it is essential that they acknowledge that shared experiences play a role in potential travellers' decision making. However, negative postings may have a beneficial outcome as negative postings by previous guests of the hotel may result in the management of the hotel devising proactive ways in which to improve their service quality. According to Tse (2013:905), if a hotel is to be able to sustain interest and generate more business, it is essential that it is prominent in social media and that it is responsive to the comments of customers. Both the position and the reputation of a hotel may be enhanced if it ranked and rated on social media as this should, ultimately, bring in new and more business to the hotel. Social media in this regard is powerful or as is positive word of mouth.

In terms of the way in which the hotel influenced unplanned messages to ensure message consistency was made by the comments made by the participants to the effect the management of the hotel was making a concerted effort to ensure that they influenced the hotel's unplanned messages. Despite the fact that, at the time of the study, the hotel did not have a strong present on social media, the hotel had, nevertheless, managed to increase the volume of business and increase revenue. At the time of the study it appeared that the management of the hotel was not doing very much to influence the unplanned message, especially on social media, but also that the hotel was relying heavily on social media despite the lack of a social media presence. In addition, the hotel relied heavily on positive word of mouth originating from the perceptions and experiences of the guests. One participant responded as follows: "Social media gives information to people without your having to talk to them first. Social media is so fast but effective, I don't even understand it. Through social

media, we have looked at the amount of bookings, it has doubled. They (customers) can look at our web page and build their perceptions. Social media can help to grow the idea in their minds.” The views of the participant were consistent with that of (Nizamuddin 2015:17) this was evident in the responses of both the guests and staff of the hotel. According to a participant, “What we do at the moment to get across our messages to the target audience to place the messages that we want to pass across and, somehow, they just spread”. This, according to the participant, had helped to increase the business of the hotel.

In respect of the way in which the hotel influenced unplanned messages to ensure message consistency it from evident from the responses that some of the hotel guests visited the hotel as a result of the perception of previous guests about the service they had received. Social media also helped in this regard although the hotel did not have a strong presence on social media. A participant explained that “people who have been guests at the hotel post their own experiences and perceptions on the internet and others get the message and give it a try”. In other words, the hotel received word of mouth referrals. According to Abubakar and Mavondo (2013:838), positive word of mouth (WOM) as a source of unplanned messages may be instrumental as a way of disseminating reliable information, for example, recommending the quality of the service received and making positive remarks about a certain aspect of the service, thereby encouraging friends and family to try the service provider. In addition, word of mouth is important if the type of product or service offering is intangible and based either on the previous experience of users of the service offering or on the credibility of the service provider. It may even be argued that word of mouth is paramount in the success of a service provider. It is important that there is consistency in all aspects of an organisation’s communication Šerić and Gil-Saura (2012:825), assert that creating a clear and consistent image is assisted by speaking in one voice and coordinating various marketing communication tools throughout the organisation.

After discussing the qualitative analysis that was conducted for the purposes of the study, it was deemed important to provide a summary of the occurring themes which emerged from both the in-depth interviews conducted and the observations made during the process and also to provide a summary of this chapter before proceeding

to chapter five which contains the conclusions of this study and recommendations for further investigation.

Table 4.2: Table highlighting the thematic evidence gleaned from the interviews

Planned messages	Thematic evidence
	<p>Inadequate use of the traditional marketing mix to promote the hotel's market offering.</p>
	<p>Weak online present, not strong enough to attract more customers.</p>
	<p>Website pages and facebook pages not updated regularly leaving the information on this social media sites obsolete.</p>
	<p>Weak communication between management and staff of the hotel. staff are not adequately informed of what is going on in the hotel. Internal communication is weak and it untimely affect the operation of the hotel's business.</p>
	<p>Staff are not encouraged to be proactive. The manager does everything.</p>
Product messages	Thematic evidence

The hotel's rates are fine and not expensive.

The rooms are in good conditions.

Lack of entertainment and alcoholic beverages.

Service messages	Thematic evidence
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Staff lack motivation

Staff needs more training so as to carry out their job functions effectively.

Unplanned messages	Thematic evidence
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Majority of the guest's at the hotel knew about the hotel via word of mouth.

The View Boutique Hotel according to majority of the participant is a good hotel that is worth making repeat visit to.

Guests of the hotel get value for the money spent at the hotel.

Source: Researcher's own compilation 2018.

4.4 SUMMARY

This chapter discussed the analysis and interpretation of the planned, unplanned, product and service messages of the View Boutique Hotel was presented. In-depth interviews were conducted with the marketing manager, marketing staff and guests of the hotel. The responses of the participants were then compared as they related to the four IMC message typology. The planned messages of the hotel revealed that the management of the hotel was not making full use of the traditional marketing mix to promote the hotel's market offering. It was found that the hotel was using its websites and social media platforms, such as Facebook, to create an awareness of its product offering. The hotel outsourced its marketing promotional activities to a company that ran these activities on behalf on the hotel and which also networked with online tour agencies. However, this was clearly not sufficient to attract the business the hotel wanted. It is imperative that a service business, such as a hotel, has a strong online presence as the internet and social media have become a strong source of attracting more business for hotels. At the time of the study the hotel was making use of its website and Facebook page. However, these were not updated on a regular basis.

The website was the platform that the hotel was using to promote its market offering but it was not directly managed by the hotel as the hotel was outsourcing its marketing promotion activities to a marketing company to run on its behalf. In other words, the hotel was outsourcing its marketing promotion to an agent to handle. The study also indicated that communication was weak within the organisation. It was, thus, clear that the hotel needed to expend more effort on ensuring that staff members become involved in communication in the hotel because the manager was doing everything. In order to ensure message consistency across all the hotel's communication channels, there was a need for internal communication within the hotel as internal communication plays a pivotal role in that since it ensures that staff members are kept informed, aware and up to date about vital information that may assist both in the smooth running of the hotel and also enhance synergy among the staff. The main perception of the marketing staff members and the guests about the planned messages of the hotel was that the hotel still had considerable work in respect of its marketing promotion as this was lagging behind.

Product messages are messages that emanate from an organisation's product offering. It is essential that the management of a hotel makes it a priority to satisfy the customer by providing quality products and service. Within the hospitality industry, hotels must enhance their business by prioritising the provision of quality services and products to their customers in order to ensure customer satisfaction, thus creating repeat customers. The product messages of the hotel in respect of the quality of the rooms were clearly positive as it emerged that the condition of the rooms was extremely good with quality furniture. This was obviously of benefit to the business of the hotel as the guests were pleased. However, it also became clear that, in relation to the food, beverages, entertainment and recreation, this is one area in which the hotel was failing despite these being a core product of a service industry such as a hotel. Guests look forward to these core aspects being in place when they book or arrive at a function in the hotel and are disappointed if their expectations are not met. According to the guest participants, although there had been some improvements, the hotel, nevertheless, should devise way to include or organise events that would meet customer expectations.

The majority of the participants expressed the view that the rate/prices versus the value proposition of the hotel were fair although some of them mentioned that they found the prices/rate to be relatively high. In order to influence the product messages so as to ensure message consistency, it is recommended that the management of the hotel investigate improving those areas of its core product, such as the beverages, lounges, facilities for the disabled, conferencing, entertainment and recreation, as the guest participants had complained about these and, clearly, effort was required. In particular, the study founds the aspects of entertainment, and alcoholic beverage also needed urgent attention as the hotel was lacking in regard to these. The participants indicated that they had to place a special order with the hotel to make an arrangement for alcoholic beverages because the hotel did not have an assortment of beverages in stock. However, as mentioned above in the discussion on the rates/price versus the value proposition of the hotel, there was clearly not a problem as the majority of the participants were of the view that the rates/prices were good with a few of the participants only expressing different views. However, this is normal or to be expected in any business.

In regard to service message, it is incumbent on staff members to be proactive in delivery impeccable service to the guests to ensure that guests repeat their visits. However, the study found that this was clearly not the case, perhaps as a result of a lack of motivation and/or staff training and inadequate communication. The third research objective was to describe the perceptions of the marketing staff and guests about the hotel's service messages. Accordingly, issues such as staff competence, staff human relations skill, booking and payment system, travel agencies and the physical environment of the hotel were discussed. It was found that the staff competence and human relation skills needed to improve. In view of the fact that it seemed that staff members lacked confidence when dealing with guests it was recommended that the management of the hotel organise training for the staff across every level as this would help boost staff morale and increase the guests' confidence in the hotel. The majority of the participants also hinted that the location of the hotel made it difficult to find the hotel as the hotel was situated in an ordinary neighbourhood that is in a suburb far from the main road. In addition, there were restrictions on the hours during which a function could go on for on the hotel premises.

The issue of booking, payment system and quality services provided by travel agencies was particularly relevant to this study because the hotel made use of the services offered by travel agencies. The study found that the prices charged by the hotel were very acceptable and were seen as offering value for money. In addition, payment system was effective. As regards the travel agencies, the hotel clearly had a good relationship with them and, hence, they brought in business for the hotel. However, the location of the hotel was not in the hotel's favour. Although the building was adequate and there was adequate and secured guest parking there were time limits for events taking place in the hotel because of the location of the hotel. This would create a favourable impression on the guests, thus meeting their expectation about hotel's services and, ultimately, prompting them to make a repeat visit and also recommend the hotel to friends and relatives.

There was a lack of information about the hotel in regular advertisements and the hotel did not have a strong online presence. Another advantage of the hotel was that the guests liked the ambience of the hotel and were quick to recommend it to their friends and relatives. On the other hand, the staff rarely made referrals because of a lack of

motivation to do so from management. However, the study found that the hotel had an admirable crisis communication method in place. The inadequate use of social media by the hotel required urgent attention as the messages about the hotel emanating from social media were not encouraging and needed to be addressed. In order to enable the hotel to influence its product messages, the participants suggested that the hotel should institute regular meeting. In addition, the staff should also be given an opportunity to provide their input into the operation of the business, particularly in areas that affect their performance of their job functions. The participants were of the opinion that this was the only way in which they could improve their productivity levels. They also indicated that the management of the hotel should also improve staff moral by addressing the issue of remuneration.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this study was to analyse the use of integrated marketing communications at the View Boutique Hotel, Johannesburg, South Africa. This chapter presents the conclusions to and recommendations emanating from the study. The findings of the study guided the sequence of the discussions that included the objectives of the study. Four research objectives were formulated for the purposes of the study. Chapter one addressed the South African tourism industry and also relationship marketing – the theoretical framework underpinning the study, chapter 2 discussed integrated marketing communication by means of a literature review, chapter 3 focused on the research approach that was used in the study, which, namely, thematic content analyses and qualitative research and chapter 4 analysed and interpreted the findings in line with the four IMC message types, namely, the planned, product, service and unplanned messages of the View Boutique Hotel. As stated above, this chapter presents the conclusions that were drawn from the findings, recommendations for future research and a summary of the chapter. The next section contains a discussion on the conclusions which were drawn based on the analysis of the empirical study and the four IMC message types.

5.1.1 Conclusions based on the analysis of the empirical study and the four IMC message types

This section of the study discusses the conclusion which were drawn based on the empirical analysis of the planned, product, service and unplanned messages of the View Boutique Hotel. The conclusions were based on the findings of the empirical study that was conducted which involved in-depth interviews with a total of 30 participants – three members of the hotel's marketing staff and 27 guests of the hotel. For each of the four IMC messages of IMC conclusions and recommendations are provided based on the objectives of the study.

5.1.1.1 Conclusions in respect of planned messages

The first objective of the study was to analyse the perceptions of the marketing staff and the guests' perceptions of the hotel's planned messages:

- Planned messages are used to inform and persuade customers to purchase an organisation's product offering. In view of the fact that this type of message originates from within the organisation, they are perceived as not credible (Duncan & Moriarty 1997:78).
- In terms of how the hotel marketed its offering it was found that the hotel was making limited use of the marketing communication tools, that is, the traditional marketing communication mix, which includes advertising, personal selling, public relations, sales promotion and sponsorships, that was available to the hotel to create a greater awareness of its product offerings.
- The hotel used its websites, Facebook, and recommendations or referrals from previous users of the hotel or its facilities and also its association with the online tour agencies to promote its market offering.
- The hotel outsourced its marketing promotional activities to a company that managed these activities on its behalf.
- The information on the hotel's website was not current because it was not regularly updated. The participants recommended that the management of the View Boutique Hotel should assign a staff member, other than the manager, to constantly ensure that current information about the hotel was being regularly uploaded onto the hotel's website. If there were no member of staff qualified to take on this task, then one should be employed. Updated and current information on the websites would attract people and retain their interest in the hotel, thus ensuring that hotel increased its bottom line and achieve what it has set out to achieve.
- The participants recommended that the hotel should post current information on its website so as to keep customers informed of present and upcoming events in the hotel.
- The hotel should also promote its marketing offering and enhance its online present by going beyond Facebook and its website in order to build a strong online present.

- To ensure message consistency across all its marketing communication channels, the hotel should engage the staff more in the management of the View Boutique Hotel as was apparently not the case at the time of the study with the manager doing everything in this regard. There appeared to be an absence of internal communication within the hotel with this resulting in a lack of commitment on the part of the staff.
- The level of consistency of the hotel's messages was tailored to positively depict the type of message that the hotel wished to communicate to its audience in that the manager handled all form of communication or information that went out from the hotel with staff members not being allowed to be proactive or use their discretion in this regard. In other words, it appeared that the hotel was operating like a "one-man show" with the staff scarcely being allowed to provide any input.

5.1.1.2 Conclusions in respect of product messages

The second objective of the study is to describe the perceptions of the marketing staff and guests of the hotel's product messages.

- As regards the hotel's product offerings, such as the rooms, it was concluded that the hotel rooms were in good condition.
- The findings of the in-depth interview on the issue concerning the beverage, entertainment and recreation at the hotel were negative. However, the hotel could change this perception if the management were to conduct a survey among the guests and accept their recommendations on how to improve in this regard. In a service industry, such as hotels, food, beverages, entertainment and recreation play a vital role in the effective daily operation of the institution.
- The food was good. This was definitely an advantage for the hotel as, when guests stay in a hotel, they usually anticipate that there will food provided. In relation to this aspect, the hotel was clearly doing well and the guests were pleased with the food that the hotel was providing.
- The participants suggested that the hotel should improve on its stock of assorted alcohol and non-alcoholic beverages for the convenience of the hotel

guests. The majority of the guests explained that they had to go to the shop in order to buy beverages. This could easily be perceived as incompetence on the part of the staff and/or management of the hotel with such perceptions, especially on the part of guests, impacting negatively on the image of the hotel. Should this be the case the hotel could lose customers while potential customers could be dissuaded from visiting the hotel.

- In order to influence its product messages, the participants recommended that the hotel introduce entertainment such as live band, and dance nights. In addition, the hotel staff should take the trouble to find out about the tastes and preferences of the guests as this would make the guests, especially those who use the hotel repeatedly, feel special knowing that the hotel is willing to make an extra effort to make them feel that they are receiving value for their money.
- In respect of the rates/prices versus the value proposition of the hotel majority of the participants were positive, especially in view of the fact that the hotel is a boutique hotel with a high rating. However, as was to be expected, some of the guests perceived the price/rate as somewhat high, stating that not everyone is able to afford them. The View Boutique Hotel had been built to meet the accommodation needs of people. However, there are people who prefer the finer things in life but who are not willing or are reluctant to pay for these finer things. Accordingly, the hotel was not prepared to reduce its rates/prices to its detriment in order to accommodate everyone. However, it is recommended the hotel could introduce special offers, such as reduced rate in certain seasons or complimentary services or gifts, to show its appreciation to guests.
- The participants expressed the view that the hotel could influence its product messages to ensure message consistency by improving the hotel's product offering. In the case of the View Boutique Hotel, facilities such as the conferencing, lounges, facilities for the disabled and a well-stocked bar could be improved or upgraded. Although these facilities were offered, they were not adequate to accommodate the number of guests that the hotel received. In addition, the stairways were not suitable for the disabled. If the management

of the hotel could investigate this and make more provision to accommodate disabled guests this would go a long way to improving their experience.

5.1.1.3 Conclusions in respect of service messages

The third objective was to analyse perceptions of the marketing staff and the guests' perceptions of the hotel's service messages.

- As regards the competence of the hotel staff, the general perception was positive. The hotel's service quality was good, and the staff members were swift to respond to the needs of the guests. However, there were some areas that the staff needed to improve upon. It was found that the hotel staff members always seemed to be reluctant to face a guest(s). They appeared not to want to be seen. This may have been indicative of low self-esteem or fear whenever their attention was required. This may have stemmed from the fact that they are not allowed to be proactive without first discussing their ideas with the manager to ensure his/her approval. However, such behaviour could be checked if the management of the hotel devised a plan and send the staff for training. This would not only boost staff confidence, but it would also motivate the staff. The guests would then be happier, and the image of the hotel would improve.
- It was recommended that the staff should go for training to improve their human relations skill and also that the management of the hotel should seek ways in which to motivate staff members to ensure they were dedicated to performing their work functions.
- The View Boutique Hotel had a flawless booking system. There were numerous ways in which guests could book at the View Boutique hotel. For example, guests could book online at discounted rates or book directly at the normal rate. The majority of the hotel use this booking system which is both easy and convenient. The business world has gone digital and not everyone has time available to go to the hotel's physical location to make a booking with the system in place clearly working in the favour of the hotel.

- The payment system at the View Boutique Hotel was also excellent with guests having the option to pay with cash, credit or debit cards or make a transfer. There were no complaints about the payment system.
- The hotel's partnership with the travel agents was clearly a sound initiative that was of benefit to the hotel in that it was bringing in considerable business for the hotel. If the hotel could widen its scope in this terrain and partner with numerous travel agents both within and outside of the region, this would increase the popularity of the hotel and attract more customers.
- There was a general suggestion that the location of the hotel was not favourable for the hotel business. In fact, an increasing number of hotels are being erected in unconventional locations and this appears not to have deterred people from using such facilities. There are certain types of people who actually prefer such locations. It was clear that the location of the hotel was not impacting negatively on its business.
- Although the building is old it was still in good condition. The ambience of the hotel attracted people as it was welcoming and homely. There is something unique about the hotel with its history and people are often attracted by such places with this attribute alone encouraging guests wanting to stay at the hotel.
- The parking facilities were safe but did not accommodate very many vehicles. This limited parking space was attributed to the building initially having been built for private use in a residential neighbourhood and converted into a hotel at a later stage. Generally, the parking available at such buildings is not extensive. It was, thus, recommended that the hotel management look to acquiring a property close by and convert it into safe parking to accommodate the guests.
- The environment of the hotel was well taken care of, clean and safe.
- The View Boutique Hotel could influence service messages to ensure message consistency by ensuring that the communication method used was effective and included all levels of staff, or it could be done via internal marketing so as to ensure uniformity in the service messages the hotel sent out.

5.1.1.4 Conclusions in respect of unplanned messages

The fourth objective was to analyse the perceptions of the marketing staff and guests' perceptions of the hotel's unplanned messages.

- Based on the responses received from the in-depth interview it was concluded that media coverage of the hotel was not sufficient. However, the hotel could improve by establishing a prominent presence on the internet and also using the relevant marketing communication mix that is applicable to the hotel sector. In addition, the View Boutique Hotel could also consider using television and magazines to advertise its product offering. Although this method is considered to be expensive it would be both effective and efficient in creating a greater awareness of the hotel and expand its media coverage.
- The study found that the majority of the hotel guests had come to hear about the hotel by means of referrals, primarily word of mouth referrals. It is, however, recommended that the hotel should not rely heavily on such word of mouth referrals. Most hotels are communicating with and reaching diverse target audiences through mediums such as social media platforms, for example, Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. Thus, the View Boutique Hotel could also use such mediums.
- Word of mouth is a form of unplanned messages that was helping the hotel to attract a significant amount of business.
- As regards the perceptions of friends and family of the View Boutique Hotel, there were differing views. The majority of these were positive with a few participants only expressing negative views. The disparities in their views clearly emanated from their different relationships with and experiences of the hotel. However, irrespective of their views, the participants recommended that the management of the hotel should organise meetings with the staff and resolve their issues internally. The staff is a hotel's most precious resource and it is the way in which they perform their duties that helps to keep the hotel in business, thus, it is important that their feelings are also considered.
- There were disparities in the participants' views about the way in which the hotel handled complaints with the guest participants expressing that they were very satisfied with the way in which their complaints were handled by the

management of the hotel while it appeared that the staff participants are satisfied about complaints were handled. Based on the responses it seemed that the staff participants were not being adequately informed about how issues were addressed at the hotel, thus indicating a lack of communication between staff and management. This lack of communication in turn was leading to decline in staff morale and motivation. It is, therefore, recommended that management devise ways in which to resolve this issue.

- The messages on social media about the hotel were found to be predominantly positive. However, there were also some negative comments about the outdated information about the hotel on its websites and this was not encouraging. The participants recommended that the hotel should endeavour to establish a prominent online presence on the social media platforms.
- The hotel could influence unplanned messages to ensure message consistency by registering a strong online presence. At the time of the study the management of the hotel was make much of an effort to influence the unplanned messages about the hotel, especially on social media. However, management did seem to rely on social media despite the lack of a strong online presence. It was clear from the from the perceptions and experiences of the guests that the hotel relied heavily on the positive word of mouth. The hotel should endeavour to influence unplanned messages to ensure message consistency through the perceptions of guests about the service they receive. Social media could play a significant role in this regard.

The next section focuses on the managerial implications of the study as well as the proposed recommendations based on the findings of the study.

5.2 MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

5.2.1 Planned messages

One of the objectives of the study was to analyse the perceptions of the marketing staff and guests about the hotel's planned messages. As already mentioned, planned messages consist of the traditional elements of the marketing communication mix, namely, advertising, personal selling, public relations, sales promotions and

sponsorships (Duncan & Moriarty 1997:78). The marketing communication methods used primarily by hotels to create an awareness of and promote their service offering included advertising, personal selling, public relations, sales promotion and sponsorships. These basic tools which are used to realise an organisation's communication objectives are often referred to as the promotional mix. However, the opinion of Koekemoer (2014:11) the promotional mix is "not something that is set and used in the same way over and over". He reiterates that marketing communication mix comprises of a combination of the various elements of the mix depends on the perception of the prevailing market environment. However, it appeared that the View Boutique Hotel was using its websites, Facebook, recommendation or referrals from visitors to the hotel or its facilities and its association with the online tour agencies to promote its market offering.

It is vitally important that the View Boutique Hotel establish a more prominent presence on the internet. The majority of businesses are reliant on the social media because the internet is about to reach a countless number of people in a very short time. More than ever before, the number of individuals who surf the internet for information is increasing with more and more people using the internet to search for information and find good deals. The Hotel could improve its online presence effectively at the basic and reactive levels by creating e-relationships on their websites and also by showing greater commitment to and making more of an effort to build more features at the advanced levels. This view is consistent with that of Tse (2013:897-898) to the effect that, in the hotel industry, the use of the internet as a marketing platform has shown phenomenal growth and has advanced significantly in the past decade. A few years before this study, approximately one fifth of hotel chains only provided real-time processing of online transactions as a result of insignificant foresight in relation to the strategic use of the internet. The majority of hotels, irrespective of size and/or category, were doing little to exploit the unique transformational potential of the internet. However, electronic business-to-customer development has grown as a result of the internet's potential as a major distribution channel that provides direct communications with hotel customers in a cost-effective way. It is obvious that the internet had fundamentally transformed the hotel industry and hospitality distribution. According to one participant, "the hotel should put more effort in to creating a strong online present, they are not strong on the social media" while another participant was

of the view that “only a few people post comments on the internet, on Facebook, about the hotel”. According to one participant “most organisations use the versatility that being prominent online provides to take their business to the next level, I advise that the hotel should do likewise” while yet another participant stated that “if the hotel does not have a strong online present, how will they be known?”.

It was found that the most marketing communication methods used most frequently by the View Boutique hotel included its websites but with social media such as Facebook topping the list followed by word of mouth recommendations and its association with online tour agencies. Although these measures are effective there would be an improvement if the relevant marketing communication mix were included. Kotler and Armstrong (2004:77) advise that, as far as promoting the hotel business and hospitality industry in general is concerned, advertising is the most popular form of promotion. However, it is vital that the advertisements are well planned to ensure that the message they are conveying reaches the targeted audience at the right time if they are to achieve the desired result. This opinion is consistent with that of Cooper et al (2008:557 & 605.) who found that, in relation to promoting the hotel business and hospitality industry generally, advertising has been found to be the most efficient and effective form of promotion, provided that the right channel is used and a suitable place selected for the advertisement.

According to Reid and Bojanic (2009:18), promotion plays the same role in every marketing situation. It is also important for an organisation to carve a niche out for its product offering in the market. This may be achieved by creating an unparalleled brand image and a name and by communicate the value of its offering by using promotional tools. Clow and Baack (2004:5) highlight that communication/promotion is a process of disseminating and processing information.

There is also a need for the hotel to sponsor events that will make it more popular and attract media attention. It is recommended that the relevant marketing communication tools should be used strategically so as to promote synergy within the hotel. According to Koekemoer (2014:8), event sponsoring as an element of the marketing communication mix involves sponsors providing financial or other types of support to an organisation, an individual or a group while, in return, the sponsor is given rights to

associate its name, organisations, product or brand and logo with the programme or event that is being sponsored. However, it does sometimes happen that the sponsor spends a large amount of money without receiving much benefit in return. However, the benefit that the sponsor receives may include the organisation in question gaining popularity with the public especially if the event is a charity event.

The marketing communication methods that the hotel should look to employ in the future should advertisements in magazines, as people tend to read this type of magazine, and sponsorship. These measures should ensure a greater awareness of the hotel with this in turn translating to more business for the hotel as a result of the wide coverage and exposure and an increased target audience. Although television and magazine advertising is considered to be expensive this form of advertising does provide expansive exposure and, due to its visual impact, it sticks in the mind of the audience. Discounting is a further method that the hotel should also consider as it should increase business during the off-peak periods.

5.2.2 Service messages

The second objective of the study was to analyse perceptions of the marketing staff and guests about the hotel's service messages. Service messages are derived from contact with representatives of the organisation such as the staff. This type of messages is often personal and also strong because of its persuasive nature. A study revealed that it is five times cheaper to retain old customers than to acquire new ones. The responses of the participants during the in-depth interviews provided evidence that service messages are the most highly rated of the four types of IMC messages. The participants recommended that the hotel should endeavour to influence its service messages in being proactive in putting measures in place for the training of staff to ensure that staff members acquire the relevant skills and knowledge that they need if they are to perform optimally. This should also result in the staff being more responsive with the guests. In line with the views of Turkoz and Ayse (2008:150), service messages emanate from the experience of dealing with the organisation and its employee, agents and products. This includes the behaviour of the members of staff of the organisation and the services provided and also whether the system and technology being used are in line with the organisation's objectives and whether they

send out appropriate message about the organisation. Findings in previous studies on services messages have shown that in organisations, such as hotels, service messages may be effective using internal marketing. Internal marketing refers to a planned effort that utilises a marketing-like approach to motivate, inform, educate and coordinate internal customers which, in this case, refers to the employees of the hotel. Thus, internal marketing is directed towards creating satisfaction for the external customers or guests and, ultimately, enhance business performance.

In a service industry, such as a hotel, there is a need for the location of the hotel to be easily accessible. Accordingly, the hotel should ensure that its signage and directions are more conspicuous than appeared to be the case so that guests and potential customers are able to find the hotel without much trouble. Kulcsár (2014:82) advises hotels should continuously consider environmental issues such as the elements of external and the internal environment. Although the hotel's parking facilities were safe the participants recommended that the parking be expanded to accommodate more vehicles. In addition, the participants recommended that the hotel should take into consideration the disabled and that the hotel should design more facilities that would accommodate the needs of the disabled.

5.2.3 Product messages

The third objective of the study was to analyse the perceptions of marketing staff and the guests about the hotel's product messages. Product messages are messages which sent out to the targeted audience by the product itself. Thus, product messages refer to messages from the product, price, or distribution elements. According to Arens (2006:246), this type of messages communicates to a large extent the details of the product through the use of colour, type fonts, layout, imagery and design. It is recommended that the View Boutique Hotel should look into its product messages and try to influence these messages by upgrading the facilities and furniture, providing more recreational activities and stocking the bars with an assortment of alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages so that guests do not have to bring their own drinks or go to the shops to buy drinks when they are making use of the hotel for accommodation or for events. In addition, the hotel should offer activities such as dance nights as well as

more entertainment. In other words, the hotel should continuously improve and upgrade its product offering.

5.2.4 Unplanned message

One of the research objectives was to analyse the perceptions of the marketing staff and the guests about the hotel's unplanned messages. Unplanned messages are regarded as a more credible source of information than the other types of messages. Unplanned messages are generally deemed to be believable because the sources of these unplanned messages are regarded as credible. However, Duncan and Moriarty (1997:88) suggests that it is difficult for an organisation to control this type of messages and that all the organisation may do is influence such messages. External sources of unplanned messages include word of mouth, social media and traditional media. These sources are all considered to be credible and unbiased. It is recommended that the View Boutique Hotel should influence the unplanned messages to ensure that it already acceptable crisis communication method as the guests were clearly satisfied with the method the hotel was using to manage crisis. In order to obviate negativity, the hotel should include the staff in this aspect of crisis communication. The hotel relied extensively on word of mouth as an effective promotional tool to promote its product offering. This method was clearly working in its favour in that it was bringing in more business. In line with the advice of Nizamuddin (2015:17), organisation such as hotels are employing communication platforms such as social media and user generated content (UGC) as valuable information resources. Although hotels do not have any control over what social media users do or the type of information and experiences they upload onto their social media sites, an hotel can influence such messages through its own social media campaigns. It is also imperative that the hotel should monitor media by monitoring the media coverage of its activities to detect negative publicity and then put measures in place to combat such negative publicity.

5.3 OPPORTUNITIES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The focus of this study was to analyse the use of integrated marketing communication at the View Boutique Hotel, Johannesburg. There have been previous studies conducted on IMC and hotels with various ratings in South Africa. The study focused on one of the pillars of IMC only, namely, the IMC message typology. Accordingly,

future research could focus on the other pillars of IMC such as stakeholders, content, channels and result. It is worth mentioning that this study used only the qualitative research method. It is, thus, recommended that future researchers should use quantitative research due to the expansive nature of the quantitative research method and the fact that it is possible to generalise quantitative research findings. As compared to qualitative research quantitative research allows for the researcher to select a larger sample that would be representative of the population, thus increasing the generalisability of the outcome(s) to the population. Using a large sample may also reduce sampling error. In addition, it is also more cost effective and less time consuming to administer questionnaires to a large number of individuals than to conduct interviews with large number of individuals within a specific time frame.

5.4 SUMMARY

The conclusions were drawn from the findings, the recommendations made, and the summary of the chapter were based on the analysis of the empirical study which was conducted and the four IMC message types, namely, planned, service, product and unplanned messages, of the View Boutique hotel. For each of the four messages, conclusions were drawn, and recommendations made in relation to the objectives of the study. The managerial implications of the study were discussed based on the four IMC message types and the objectives of the study. The most preferred medium or elements of the traditional marketing mix used by organisations to create awareness, for example, the View Boutique Hotel, were discussed and suggestions and recommendation offered as to how the hotel may effectively achieved this by either using all the elements or by selecting some of the element that would the hotel's goals and objectives at a particular time or a combination of elements that would a particular issue. Factors such as organisations disseminating planned messages via the use of the traditional elements of the marketing mix were discussed. It was further explained that not all the mix should be used at the same time for the same purpose and that it is up to the organisation to select the mix that is suited to a particular occasion. Organisations may organise planned messages in a such way that the organisation may also make a brand promise by sending the planned messages to both its customers and its prospective customers.

Product messages may create a foundation on which communication decisions may be made within an organisation. A product is, thus, a vital component of a marketing mix. Product messages stem from the attributes of an organisation's product offering such as the product durability, the price attached to the product, the channels through which the product is distributed to the customers as well as the features, performance, conformance, quality, reliability, reparability and style. When a product satisfies the customers' needs and expectation, they will usually make a repeat visit. Such a repeat visit enhances the opportunity to establish a good relationship between the organisation and its customers. It is important that an organisation to consistent as regards the type of message it sends out. In addition, an organisation should be able to influence product messages in order to ensure message consistency.

Service messages originate from the experience a customer derives from the customer's association with the organisation and its employee, agents and products. Service messages may be noticeable from the attitude of the employees of the organisation and the services delivered, whether the system and technology used are in line with the organisation's objectives and whether the messages are appropriate in relation to the organisation. This type of message may be disseminated via internal marketing. Internal marketing may be used by an organisation to reinforce the marketing communication objectives of an organisation to the employees. The organisation may use a marketing-like approach to motivate, inform, educate and coordinate its internal customers which, in this case, refer to the employees of the organisation.

Unplanned messages are viewed as unbiased, reliable and credible. It is felt that such messages reveal the genuine status of an organisation. Unplanned messages are generally deemed to be believable because the sources of these unplanned messages are regarded as credible. It is not possible for an organisation either to control this type of messages nor is it possible for these messages to be directed in the favour of the organisation. They may be influenced by the organisation only in that the sources of unplanned messages are word of mouth, social media and traditional media and these are all the result of experiences. However, unplanned messages may, for example, be influenced by the organisation in a situation such as managing crisis that has arisen. The organisation may put efficient measures in place to deal with the crisis, thereby

ensuring that, if it already has a sound crisis communication method, this is not compromised. Ultimately, the customers are happy and satisfied with the method the hotel used in this regard and is clearly working in its favour.

Suggestions for future research include shifting the focus from analysing the use of IMC at the View Boutique Hotel Johannesburg only and also from just one of the pillars of IMC, namely, the IMC message typology. It is, thus, recommended that further studies on the other pillars of IMC, such as stakeholders, content, channels and result, be undertaken. In addition, research methods other than the qualitative research method, for example, mixed methods, could be used in future studies. In addition, owing to its flexibility it allows the researcher to select a larger sample that is representative of the population. This increases the generalisability of the outcome(s) to the population in question. The advantages of using a large sample, as compared to a small sample, include the reduction of sampling error, it is cheaper, and it involves a shorter period of time. It is more time consuming to administer questionnaires to large number of individuals than it is to conduct interviews with a large number of individuals within a specific time frame.

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Appendix A: Letter from my supervisor



16 November 2017

To Whom It May Concern,

Dear Sir/Madam

**RE: RESEARCH PROJECT ON THE USE OF INTEGRATED MARKETING
COMMUNICATION IN SOUTH AFRICAN HOTELS**

Mrs Chinelo Mebuge (student number: 5613360) is pursuing her Master's degree in communication at the University of South Africa. As part of her studies she has to plan and implement a research project on communication topic. Her provisional topic is "Analysing integrated marketing communication in selected hotels in South Africa". The study will shed light on how the hotels promote their services from an integrated marketing communication perspective. Significantly, the study will provide integrated marketing communication guidelines for the hotels. We shall be grateful if you can assist Mrs Mebuge to collect relevant data.

Thank you very much for your anticipated support and co-operation.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Takalani", is enclosed within a rectangular box.

Dr Takalani Mudzanani
Supervisor
Department of Communication
Tel: 012 429 6025
Email: mudzate@unisa.ac.za



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Appendix B: Letter to the hotel

19 Molesey Avenue,
Auckland Park,
Johannesburg.
25 November 2017.

The Marketing Manager,
The View Boutique Hotel,
Johannesburg.

Dear Sir,

RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT YOUR HOTEL

I would like to request permission to conduct a study at your hotel. I am Master's degree student at the University of South Africa and I am conducting a study on Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) in partial fulfilment of my degree. My research topic is "Analysing integrated marketing communication within a boutique hotel in Johannesburg South Africa". Although studies on IMC have been carried out previously on bigger hotels, there remains a gap to be filled in the hospitality industry with few or no studies having been conducted in a boutique hotel, hence the interest in this sector. To this end, I deemed it worthwhile to investigate the concept of IMC as implemented at the View Boutique Hotel.

It is anticipated that this study on IMC at the View Boutique Hotel will enable the researcher to determine whether the IMC used in the hotel is consistent and integrated with the planned, product, and service and product messages of hotel. The study will also attempt to uncover the marketing communication challenges confronting the hotel and, ultimately, it is hoped that it will provide or suggest new methods for the View Boutique Hotel to combat these challenges. The research will be conducted in two phases. The first phase will involve an interview with the marketing manager while the second phase will involve interviews with the participants, 27 guests of the hotel and at least three members of the hotel's marketing staff, bringing it to a total of 30 participants. The interviews will be conducted at the hotel premises at times most suitable to you.

Your cooperation will be highly appreciated.

Yours faithfully,

Mrs Chinelo Mebuge

Appendix C: Permission letter from the hotel

SIMANITE (PTY) LTD

t/a



To whom it may concern

01.12.2017

Permission Letter

Please note that this letter serves as permission for Ms. Chinelo Mebuge to conduct her research assignment at The View Boutique Hotel. We will be happy to assist in any way possible with the assignment, as laid out in the we received from Ms. Mebuge.

Should you have any further enquiries, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Best Regards,

Maqhawe Mkandla

General Manager
The View Boutique Hotel
Tel: 011 482 6897
Cell: 083 564 5454

Appendix D: Ethical clearance certificate



College of Human Sciences
Department of Communication Science
15 January 2018

Reference number: 2018_CHS_Staff_CommSt_003

Proposed title: ANALYSING INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATION WITHIN A BOUTIQUE HOTEL IN JOHANNESBURG

Principle investigator: CHINELO OGOCHUKWU MEBUGE, Department of Communication Science

Approval status recommended by reviewers: Approved

The Ethics Review Committee of the Department of Communication Sciences at the University of South Africa has reviewed the research proposal and considers the methodological, technical and ethical aspects of the study to be appropriate.

Mr. CHINELO OGOCHUKWU MEBUGE is requested to maintain the confidentiality of all data collected from or about research participants, and maintain security procedures for the protection of privacy. The committee needs to be informed should any part of the research methodology as outlined in the Ethics application (Ref. Nr.2018_CHS_Staff_CommSt_003) change in any way.

It is the responsibility of the principal investigator to ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Research Ethics Policy, which can be found at the following website:

http://staffcmsys.unisa.ac.za/cmsys/staff/contents/departments/res_policies/docs/Policy%20on%20Research%20Ethics%20-%20rev%20appr%20-%20Council%20-%2015.09.2016.pdf

This certificate is valid for three years.

Sincerely

Mr Gibson Chauke
Chair: Departmental Research Committee
Department of Communication Science



University of South Africa
Preller Street, Muckleneuk Ridge, City of Tshwane
PO Box 392 UNISA 0003 South Africa
Telephone: +27 12 429 3111 Facsimile: +27 12 429 4150
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Appendix E: Informed consent

Good day, my name is Chinelo Mebuge. I am inviting you to participate in a research study I would be conducting on integrated marketing communication in this hotel in partial fulfilment of my Master's dissertation. The aim of the interviews is to gain a better understanding of and have a deeper learning experience on your perceptions, of the hotel's planned, unplanned, product and service messages. The findings from the study may help to improve the hotel's communication efforts and improve the business operations. I want to assure you that your responses will be treated with the utmost confidentiality. All the participants' responses will be used for research purposes only. Involvement in the study is voluntary, so you may choose to participate or not. I will enlighten you more on what the study entails before the interview will take place. Please be informed that the proceedings from the interviews will be recorded and notes will also be made. Please feel free to ask any questions that you may have about the research, I will be happy to explain anything in greater detail.

Participant: All of my questions and concerns about this study have been addressed. I choose, voluntarily, to participate in this research project. I certify that I am at least 18 years of age.

Participant

Signature of participant

date

Investigator

Signature of investigator

date

Appendix F: Interview guide

Introduction

Good day, my name is Chinelo Mebuge. I am conducting a study on the integrated marketing communication in this hotel in partial fulfilment of my Master's dissertation. The objective of the interviews is to gain a better understanding of and have a deeper learning experience on your perspectives as the marketing manager involved in the hotel's planned, unplanned, product and service messages. The findings from the study should help to improve the hotel's marketing communication efforts. You will be required respond to four questions only. I want to assure you that your responses will be treated with the utmost confidentiality. All the participants' response will be used for research purposes only. Thank you very much for your willingness to participate in the study.

INTERVIEWS WITH MARKETING STAFF

Planned messages

- How do you promote your market offering?
- How do you ensure message consistency across all your marketing communication channels?

Product messages

- How do you influence product messages to ensure message consistency?

Unplanned messages

- How do you influence unplanned messages to ensure message consistency?

Service messages

- How do you influence service messages to ensure message consistency?

Any other comments:

Thank you for taking part in this interview.

Appendix G: Interview guide for guests and marketing staff of the hotel

INTRODUCTION

Good day, my name is Chinelo Mebuge. I am conducting an interview on integrated marketing communication on this hotel in partial fulfilment of my Master's dissertation. The aim of the interviews is to gain a better understanding of and have a deeper learning experience on your perceptions, as a guest of this hotel, of the hotel's planned, unplanned, product and service messages. The findings from the study should help to improve the hotel's communication efforts and improve the services provided to guests. I want to assure you that your responses will be treated with the utmost confidentiality. All the participants' responses will be used for research purposes only.

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC AND GENERAL INFORMATION

Please answer the following questions:

1. What is your gender?

MALE 1

FEMALE 2

2. Which year were you born? -----

3. From which province/country are you from? -----

Gauteng	<input type="text"/>
Free State	<input type="text"/>
Kwazulu-Natal	<input type="text"/>
Limpopo	<input type="text"/>
Eastern Cape	<input type="text"/>
Mpumalanga	<input type="text"/>
Western Cape	<input type="text"/>
Northern Cape	<input type="text"/>
North West	<input type="text"/>
Other country (please specify)	<input type="text"/>

4. What is your occupation? -----

5. What is the highest level of education you have attained?

None	<input type="text"/>
Diploma/degree	<input type="text"/>
Post-graduate	<input type="text"/>
Professional	<input type="text"/>
Other (please specify)	<input type="text"/>

SECTION B: INTERVIEW WITH GUESTS

Planned messages

- What are your comments on the way in which the hotel promotes its market offering?
- What are your views on the level of consistency of the hotel's messages?
- How should the hotel promote its market offering?

Product messages

- What are your comments on the hotel rooms?
- What are your views on the food, beverages, entertainment and recreation at the hotel?
- What are your comments on the rates/prices versus the value proposition of the hotel?
- How should the hotel influence its product messages to ensure message consistency?

Service messages

- What are your comments on the competence of the staff at the hotel?
- What are your comments on the human relations skills of the staff at the hotel?
- What are your comments on the booking system at the hotel?
- What are your comments on the payment system at the hotel?
- What are your comments on the quality of the services provided by the travel agencies?
- What are your comments on the location of the hotel?
- What are your comments on the hotel buildings (physical environment)?
- How should the hotel influence its service messages to ensure message consistency

Unplanned messages

- What are your comments on the media coverage of the hotel?
- What are the views of your friends and relatives on the hotel?
- What are your comments on how the hotel resolves complaints?
- What are your comments on the messages about the hotel on social media?

- How should the hotel influence unplanned messages to ensure message consistency?

Any other comments:

Thank you for taking part in this interview